

Dancing flowers

**- to discover nature through art,
and art through nature**



Nature art and aesthetic documentation
Jan-Erik Sørenstuen

When nature and art meet



Student project in pre-school teacher training, HiA, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad 2005

Introduction

The conclusion drawn by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – that climate changes are mainly caused by human beings – has challenged great numbers of individuals, politicians and teachers around the world. This environmental issue has been vigorously supported and convincingly asserted by former American vice president Al Gore. In 2007 Al Gore and the IPCC were awarded the Nobel Peace prize for their active engagement in environmental issues.

Following the worldwide market decline in 2008, we find the world once again considering natural resources and environments whenever major political agendas emerge. These are closely tied in to the future of business development and political ideologies.

Our era is exceedingly dominated by a negative media focus on our planets future, therefore the impending task of ensuring that young people do not become numbed by apathy. More than ever we must now bring forth a constructive and creative focus upon nature. We must show this generations youth that each and every person has the ability to re-strengthen their connection, and identification with nature. This can be achieved by strengthening perceptual skills, awakening the aesthetic senses whereby creativity is developed through a “green approach” to art, culture and creation in our natural environment. Such a task may best be carried through by stimulating people to discover and experience nature and to develop a positive relationship to different natural environments. And then in turn be more attentive to how we as humans can team up with nature. A process like this must start early in a person’s life, preferably already at infant age.

Collaboration

During the course of this project I have had the pleasure of being able to cooperate with Professor Timo Jokela at the University of Lapland; doctorate student Jan van Boeckel at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki; Associate Professor Arild Andresen at the University of Agder, and Museum Teacher Beate Strøm Johansen at the Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden.

Furthermore, my visit to Northern Italy and interview with land art-artist Giuliano Mauri in Lodi was extremely inspiring for my work.

But most of all I would like to thank highly motivated students, whose art works have been of great inspiration for this book project.

A growing field of study without textbooks

In Finland, new faculties have been established for this type of art activity at the University of Lapland and at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki. Studies within the fields of land art, environmental art and eco-art have become enormously popular in Finland, Britain, Germany, USA, Canada and Australia.

There are several art books on the subject, but few textbooks for teachers in schools and kindergartens.

In the autumn of 2008, a group of authors, amongst them Timo Jokela and Glen Coutts, published a collection of articles entitled *Art, Community and Environment, Educational Perspectives*. This will become a highly interesting text book in universities around the

Western World, for teachers in their training towards art, environmental studies and other related subjects.

Nature art as an arena for multicultural work and international cooperation

In 1991, the University of Agder (UiA), previously Agder University College (HiA)) played a key role in establishing the Nordic ESJA Network, comprised of colleges and universities in the Nordic countries. The network's primary focus was multicultural cooperation and interaction between youth, culture, nature and aesthetics.

The first gathering took place at Breidablikk Guest House at Tromøy in Southern Norway in 1992, and was called *Det nordiske vann – The Nordic Waters*. Another gathering was held at Snæfellsnes in Iceland in 1994, and was called *To create with and in nature*.

The art projects in nature were photographed, and served as inspiration for work with children in each country. Documentation of this work became a travelling exhibition within the Nordic countries, displaying enlarged photographs of young people's land art-related works in nature. The exhibition was called *To create with and within nature*, and travelled among five Nordic countries.

Professor Timo Jokela at the University of Lapland says that their courses of study within environmental art are the studies in today's society receiving the greatest international attention and the highest numbers of foreign students.

Art projects in *Dancing flowers*

Most of the art projects described have been created in Arendal, Grimstad, Kristiansand, Hovden in Setesdal, Nesna in Nordland County and Lainio in Northern Finland.

In 2003/04 I received a research grant from the Faculty of Fine Arts at HiA. During this year I conducted a web-survey involving colleagues at Norwegian colleges which provide fine arts and arts and crafts education in teacher training around the country. I addressed the following questions: whether, to which degree, why and how my Norwegian colleagues were in fact working with nature art and aesthetic documentation. In parts of this book, I will be referring to some essential summaries from this survey.

For several years I have brought students to Hovden in Setesdal in order to create snow sculptures in public spaces in the town centre, in collaboration with Hovden Ferie and the culture officer in Bykle Municipality. These snow sculptures have been used for marketing purposes by Hovden Ferie.

I have also taken part in the decoration of the snow hotel Lainio Snow Village in Lapland in Finland. These experiences constitute a separate chapter in this book.

In 2005, one of my former students, Master of Science and text book author Beate Strøm Johansen, now a museum teacher at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, introduced my teaching material to 800 eighth-class pupils as part of an arts and crafts educational project funded by Kristiansand Municipality.

The pupils worked at Agder Natural History Museum with Beate Strøm Johansen as technical organizer and link between school and museum, and with myself as course instructor for the participating school's arts and crafts teachers. I also developed guidelines for these teachers, in cooperation with Kristiansand Municipality, The Cultural Rucksack – a national programme for art and culture, and with the University of Agder.

Photos of the pupils' work and from the resulting exhibition organized by Beate Strøm Johansen are richly represented in this book.

Finally, I would like to mention a collaboration with Nesna University College, Nesna Municipality, Nordland County Authority and The Cultural Rucksack-programme regarding land art courses for kindergarten-children, school pupils and teachers in Nesna in May 2008. Another project called "Nature Aid" took place in the autumn of 2008 involving Grimstad Municipality, the education centre Eide Oppvekstsenter and the County Governor in Aust-Agder County with courses in land art and performance art in Homborsund.

Students have passed on their experiences in schools and kindergartens throughout the region. For years, many people out on their Sunday strolls have derived pleasure from aesthetic works in nature at Hove near Arendal, Dømmesmoen in Grimstad, Hovden in Setesdal and at the Agder Natural History Museum.

We find examples of art works made by local educational institutions, like Soria Moria Kindergarten and Grandehagen Kindergarten at Eydehavn, and by all of the 800 eighth-class pupils in Kristiansand Municipality through art projects at Agder Natural History Museum in 2005. All participants created nature art / land art in the local surroundings at Hove, Tromøy.

Dancing flowers – to discover nature through art, and art through nature has roused enthusiasm in Finland, the leading country on this field among the Nordic countries. A stream of philosophical aesthetic and didactic ideas have found their way from Finland to universities in Germany, Australia, Northern England and Scotland. This has brought about new studies within land art, environmental art and eco-art in these countries.

Finland has already two professorships in this field, and studies within environmental art have become highly popular among Finnish students and students from abroad. They consider these studies to be progressive and relevant for their future as educators.

In the last part of this book I will refer to projects I have participated in as part of a collaboration between UiA and Lapland University, by decoration of the snow and ice hotel in Lainio Snow Village in Northern Finland.

I also show works from Nesna in Nordland County, where in the early summer of 2008 I was invited as festival artist and course instructor for kindergartens, schools, 4-H and Scouts, school- and pre-school teachers. This was arranged by Nesna University College, Nesna Municipality, Nordland County Authority and The Cultural Rucksack-programme.

Dancing flowers in light of research and activity

It is important to underline that my target group is not PhD Research Fellows on advanced levels looking for a textbook on research methods. My research material is based on the web survey conducted during 2003–2004, which was mentioned earlier. This survey is referred to later in this book.

Hundreds of teachers and educators in the two Agder counties have been inspired by these projects during the course of many years. This experience has been shared and spread throughout schools, cultural programmes for youth, day care facilities for schoolchildren and

kindergartens, and has inspired young people throughout the county to creative activity in nature in all four seasons of the year.

During recent years I have assembled a collection of digital photographs of my own works as well as works by students and youngsters, and written down experiences and reflections.

This book will show work done by children, youth and students in natural environments – works made of materials found in these environments. The art works are either left to decay by means of natural processes or disassembled and cleared away. But not before they are well preserved in digital photographs, later to be used in documentation and exhibitions in schools, kindergartens etc.

One chapter describes a collaboration project between educational science, arts and nature studies. This was a project about insects in the second year of pre-school teacher training. As we can see in the photos and text in this chapter, nature art is very well suited for collaboration projects involving arts, science and nature studies, outdoor life and nature, environment and technology.

It is important to underline that it is not the sciences as traditional subjects, but rather the point where nature, aesthetics and the creative human being meet that provide the conditions for creative expression.

In this way we may also hinder the aesthetic art works from evolving in a strictly scientific manner. Hopefully, this will also inspire natural sciences to adopt an observational attitude towards the aesthetic side of nature.

The type of work I describe in this book can be summarized in the following points:

- to see how different artists have worked within land art and environmental art
- to observe and analyze a natural environment in an aesthetic and environmentalist perspective
- that the teacher formulates challenges suited for each individual group
- to create aesthetic art works founded from and in harmony with natural surroundings
- to produce a site analysis based on nature and local culture (for instance previous cultures' use of the same area)
- to document processes and results in digital photographs
- to use this documentation in photo montages and posters for exhibitions
- to compose an aesthetic documentation of processes and results, as a basis for exhibitions as well as for summarizing and evaluating.

This book also deals with seeing artistic possibilities in local natural environments, using local materials. Furthermore, making use of slow-growing aesthetic, well-rooted objects as well as transitory artistic expressions blown away by the wind, swept to sea or melted in the sun. In short, art that follow the natural life cycles in the natural environments human beings encounter.

Dancing flowers – to discover nature through art, and art through nature will to a great extent be instrumental as a teaching tool within many levels of educational training, from pre-school to college level. By connecting nature's beauty and aesthetic possibilities with artistic and ecological challenges, it is my goal that this becomes a handy textbook. Hopefully, it may also become a book of general interest for people who love nature, and benefit anyone who

wishes to develop and evolve their connection to their surroundings, alone or with their children.

Acknowledgements

In addition to those I have already mentioned I would also wish to thank the people at the University of Agder (UiA) and previously Agder University College (HiA), Faculty of Fine Arts, for the research year I was granted in 2003. This enabled my work to become more systematic and scientifically structured. Amongst other things I was able to conduct a web survey sent to all colleagues in Norway working with teacher training in the field of arts.

I would also like to thank UiA at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad for letting me and my students work with nature art in the university park area.

Furthermore, I wish to thank Hovden Ferie, the University of Lapland and Lainio Snow Village, who made it possible for me to gain valuable experience working with snow- and ice sculpture.

Last, but not least, I wish to express my gratitude to my dear wife, Ruth Marion Sørenstuen, whose writing skills were invaluable in her benevolent proof-reading of my manuscript. Through our conversations she has inspired me, during the whole process with both nature art and the writing of this book.

Dancing flowers – to discover nature through art, and art through nature is partly based on research and partly on systematic experience with nature art during 20 years at working with arts and crafts at Agder University College (HiA), which from 2007 became the University of Agder (UiA). The book might be defined in the area between text book and general literature, and should be of interest both as a teaching tool and as leisure reading.

Assistant Professor Jan-Erik Sørenstuen, UiA.

To see our children ...

”Kitty, Kitty”

It is early summer, and outside the cats are playing on the lawn. We join them, watching as they tumble and roll about in the green grass, sniffing at the flowers. It is as if they are trying to tell us how wonderful nature is on this beautiful summer day, now that winter has packed up and left the garden.

A path runs through the garden leading from the neighbours’ house. A young mother comes strolling, holding her daughter Runa by the hand. Runa is but a year old and has not yet begun to speak, nor has she taken her first steps on her own.

Runa’s eyes grow wide at the sight of our ginger cat and her gaze becomes fixed. She lets go off her mother’s hand and on unsteady toddler’s feet waddles over toward the cat. The words ”Kitty, Kitty!” escape from her lips before she knows what has happened. Runa then tumbles down onto the lawn.

She forgot time and place, and that she could neither walk nor speak. Absorbed by the nature around her and in her excitement over the cat, Runa was not aware of any obstacles which she could not overcome.

She just walked! And she spoke!

A troll grabbed my poles!

With soaring speed the trees whipped past, while all the way down the hill white strips of moonlight jumped out between the trees’ dark shadows. Are was five years old, and he felt his skis and poles pulling vigorously away from him. He felt the humiliation of defeat when he fell, and the discomfort combined with the darkness and shadows made him cry out: “A troll stuck his hand out and grabbed my poles!”

Nature and the elements melt together with human culture and imagination in an intense expression. We find this expression naturally alive in small children as well as in modern art. This is also found in the folklore of the *Nightlands*, a name given to our Nordic countries by Christian Norberg-Schulz, professor of architecture. During half of each year these countries are enveloped in darkness, their perpetual dusk a perfect backdrop to awaken the creative impulses of poetry and verse. In this half light where human beings encountered untamed nature, tales were born of creatures who lived in the darkness; trolls, wood nymphs, gnomes and goblins. It is from this merging of nature and culture that our fairy tale tradition came to be.

Today we may call this *local legends* and would be an interesting supplement to environmental art connected to a specific area/region. We will discuss this concept further in this book.

”OOOHHHH!”

Just above the front door to the cottage was a fuse box. Here, a thrush pair had built a nest, too high up for any adult to peek inside. When I lifted three-year old Anneke up, however, she had a great view of the nest and proceeded proudly to tell us that there were four eggs inside.

Mother and father Thrush were perched a few meters away in a birch tree, and waited for us to complete our visit.

We repeated the experiment the next day. Suddenly, this extremely chipper and well-articulated young lady from Bergen fell silent. She uttered a stuttering sound, a long “ooohhhh!” Her entire body shook, and when I asked her what she saw she answered: “It’s ... it’s ...”

She was completely at a loss for words, at which point I asked her if there were baby birds in the nest.

The answer was “YESSSS!” Spoken with wonder and amazement.

When I set her down again I asked if they had eyes, and she nodded. Did they have mouths? Again she nodded. This chatty, chipper little lady from Bergen was still speechless with astonishment.

When I asked her what the hatchlings’ mouths looked like, she threw her head backwards and gaped her mouth open as wide as she could.

The child was enthralled by the experience and her senses were triggered beyond the realm of the ordinary experience field. This was not simply registering or verbally expressing a fact. It was experienced with her entire self. I would think that she felt it right down to her core and that the hatchlings own body language became her own in order for her to convey what she had seen.

Is this not the core of an esthetic experience and of poetic expression?

Is this not an expression of man’s inherent interest in every living thing in nature?

Is this not precisely an expression of the dedication and enthusiasm so essential to all creative forces?

It is this relationship between enthusiasm and creative impulse which kindergartens, schools and society must have in mind when developing curriculum and programs of study in all subjects.

I would not go quite as far as to agree with Jan van Boeckel: *Forget Your Botany!* However, with respect to humankind and nature alike it is vital that aesthetics, feelings, commitment and poetry are not forgotten!

Childhood’s creative play

Most of us can recollect from our own childhood playing outdoors using nature’s own materials to create spaces and environments. Play was often more centered around the actual building process than the using the completed environments, but our aim was to create places where we could hide away with our friends and share our secrets.

Four-year-olds enjoy making a circle of stones about 1 m in diameter around themselves to mark out a space or draw a circle in the earth/sand with a stick. An opening in the circle becomes the entrance. Sticks stuck down in a soft “carpet” of moss mark a boundary between the inside and outside.

A fallen tree with a large leafy top makes a nice cave.

A glade in the forest can be cleared of twigs and finally raked or swept with a broom, then decorated with flowers and spruce sprigs to provide a festive feeling adults recognize at Christmas and after spring-cleaning their homes.

Pre-school and primary school teachers should also be aware that five–eight-year-olds also wish to have a private recluse where they can hide away from adults and older children, in order to be alone with a friend under a fallen tree, in a spruce twig hut or a tent-like creation.

The living willow tree underneath was planted the year before these children had their senses challenged regarding goat willow twigs and architecture.



A fantastic experience! Child and employee in Soria Moria Kindergarten near HiA at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad 2003



All senses! Child from Soria Moria Kindergarten near HiA at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad 2003



Children from Soria Moria Kindergarten near HiA at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad 2003 are challenged to make a line of willow twigs. The adults make the holes with a lever where the children have decided where the sticks are to be planted



**Children from Soria Moria Kindergarten near HiA at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad 2003
building with sticks**



Children from Soria Moria Kindergarten, Dømmesmoen 2003

We must also remember that many 9-year-olds will think that older children having “inaccessible” places to build huts in trees is exciting, and they will pick up some good tips from the more experienced builders (social learning theories, developed by the Canadian Albert Bandura).

The need to clear up, decorate and mark out territories is a strong and basic need with small children. This creates the basis for thrilling activities if the possibilities are provided by teachers who can recollect their own childhood, and at the same time be open for new impulses from land art and nature art.

We can all remember making angels and trodden down paths in the snow that took on the shapes of wheels with spokes or a maze. Perhaps visual codes from previous cultures where sundials and mazes were part of different cultural and ritual activities.

Who can forget the joy of parallel-treading a ski-jump or slalom hill with one's skis? Preferably many people together to tread a zigzag-shaped slalom hill or a rectangle-shaped landing slope where the ski marks formed shapes and textures against the fresh white snow.

How fascinating it was to breathe on a window a cold winters day where the frost had created the most fantastic ice roses, and where we could influence the formation of these by breathing warm air against the existing roses? Or to stop in admiration over icy puddles with air bubbles. The air bubbles would move if we trod on or lifted the sheet of ice. There we could insert colours from the surroundings, like red berries and rose hips.

Who hasn't enjoyed leading spring flood water in ditches with dams and waterfalls and made use of the power to revolve small waterwheels?

This is perhaps a part of the reason why land art, nature art and eco-art are natural means of expression in schools and kindergartens in the Nordic countries. There is a multitude of nature right in front of our children, which in school is organized after botanical, zoological and ecological laws and principles.

For millenniums mankind has lived in a cultural and creative connection with this world. We have developed in an aesthetic and cultural co-existence with our surroundings.

The elements

A 17-year-old boy told me how he used to drive his moped to a weather-beaten pebble beach on the outskirts of Tromøy, facing the Skagerrak, when it was windy and the waves were high. He laid down on the sand between the boulders and pebbles and waited for the gigantic waves to wash over him. He did this just to feel he was part of the elements and nature in a dynamic entity.

A strong and sensual experience that places the human being in a very limited local nature environment, together with the elements. An experience independent of which age and culture we live in.

In today's contemporary art, such a quest for sensual experiences through this type of expression could be labeled land art, nature art, eco-art and performance-art. Apart from the fact that all art, and perhaps especially performance-art, is something one does primarily to be seen.

Land art and the elements



The experience reminds one of the land art artist Andy Goldsworthy, who lay down on a pebbled beach one winter's day and waited for it to snow. He lay stretched out like a gingerbread man on the beach. But after half an hour it still hadn't snowed. So he listened more closely to the local weather forecast and tried again the next day. It started to snow after 20 minutes. After lying in the snow for about 30 minutes, he got up and photographed the dark human impression on the beach surrounded by white snow. The photograph was used in exhibitions and in one of Goldsworthy's many catalogues of his own works.

Later that year Goldsworthy repeated a similar experiment in the rain. He lay on a dry rock, waiting for a shower to come and colour the surroundings dark grey, in contrast to his light grey impression on dry rock. In such a way he visualizes shades of gray in dry and wet surfaces. The concepts land art and eco-art will be clarified later chapters.

Nature and art as learning arena

Didactic challenges

All these examples has roused enthusiasm among young people. Enthusiastic youngsters have received an opportunity to create emotional ties to phenomena outside themselves, to life itself and nature. Ties one should think were innate, but which definitely can weaken or strengthen through kindergarten, school and culture. Consequently, such ties have for some generations had low esteem and understanding, especially in primary and lower secondary school in Norway. Here, however, we saw a substantial change after implementation of the Curriculum Reform of 1997, where even nature could be defined as classroom in all subjects.

Due to the government's interpretation of why Norwegian pupils score poorly in the PISA-surveys, primary and lower secondary education in Norway is moving towards more theory and traditional teaching. Nature as a learning arena and art and culture subjects are again threatened by reduced funding and status.

In kindergartens, however, there is a strong tradition utilizing nature as a physical play area. Pursuant to the Framework Plan for the Content and Task of Kindergartens of 2006, the staff must:

- *encourage and stimulate children to observe aesthetic phenomena and details in their encounters with nature ...*
- *ensure that children experience local, national and international artistic and cultural expressions ...*

This should promote work with nature, culture, aesthetics and creativity. What is missing in schools and in kindergartens are strategies in defining how we can build up the aesthetic experience which nature offers, and the many aesthetic forms of expression we are confronted with. In order to recreate a feeling of identity and belonging between humans and nature we must have clearer guidelines for the strengthening of these ties.

It is not my intent to discuss here the damage done to nature by humankind. It is however, my wish to emphasize that educational institutions, parents and society have the potential to develop and expand the experience of connection between people and their natural environment. An innate connection which we are seemingly equipped with from birth, and which has been described in the case-descriptions earlier.

Today we understand that our modern Western lifestyle weakens this connection between humankind and nature. All that is really missing is a cooperative effort on a range of levels, and it is precisely here that art, schools, kindergartens and society can pave the way towards changes in behaviour. In fine arts and craftwork subjects this way may lead through a diversity of nature-in-art forms of expression. What we need here is a higher competence within organizing of projects involving youth and arts-based environmental education. A higher competence is also necessary within the sphere of understanding the importance of children's feelings and commitment. By neglecting to do so we not only turn our backs on our children but we also abandon our environment.

Nature is dependent upon the respect and positive behaviour of humankind. We ourselves, as a component of nature, are in turn dependent upon the balance of the ecosystem. Our strengthened aesthetic experience with respect to nature, and our familiarity to the multitude of aesthetic languages which the forms in environmental art reveal to us; together these may be a significant alternative in re-creating a balanced environment.

Forget any research which concludes that children are not in the least interested in nature because they don't know the names of plants and insects, and are not drawing or painting nature scenes. All educators know that children draw the things which influence them the most. This statement was made by Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia kindergartens (or pre-schools, as they are called as in Italy.) This was his assertion after researching one thousand children who had attended the local pre-schools since their beginning in the 1950's. He repeated this allegation again in 1992, this time using research material based on the studies of tens of thousands of children.

The Reggio-approach was not in itself a completely new idea. Both art education and revised childhood education in the early 20th century were developing in accordance to many of the same principles.

The fact that children are creative through strong impulses is also the basis of the English drama teacher Malcolm Ross' model for creative enterprises. (Reference: Kari Carlsen & Arne Marius Samuelsen: *Inntrykk og uttrykk (Impression and expression)*, 1988)

In our present era it is commercial products such as sports cars, boats, fashionably dressed beautiful women and princesses with crowns which make up children's drawings. We see the influence of commercialism has crept in. A total absence of nature motives in children's drawings may well indicate a lack of intervention from educators and parents. Abandoning their influential posts they unwittingly allow a stream of commercial thought control to sweep in, a force which has ever increasingly refined its' power over human thought and behaviour.

I dare to say that many children and youth are starving for aesthetic nature experiences and are under-stimulated in this area. Yet we lack the guidelines in schools and pre-schools which may enable us to give them these strong and positive enduring experiences of the senses. It is precisely in the building up of such guidelines I hope that this book may be helpful.

The initiator

An initiator is an active educator who organizes in order to inspire and motivate to creative activity on one hand, and listens to the participators (children and youngsters) on the other. The Norwegian-teacher can write the beginning of a story, or quote from literature, and ask the pupils to continue and complete it. The initiator shall give the pupils a view into the problem area and tickle their curiosity, senses and their creativity by giving them an impulse strong enough to create a need for expression. (Kari Carlsen & Arne Martin Samuelsen: *Inntrykk og uttrykk*, 1988.)

It is the educator's job to find the appropriate impulses or theme areas, and to amplify these, among other things, by conversation and inquiring and experimenting activities. In connection with nature art, this means to show the pupils the area, chose appropriate pictures from nature art, and talk about natural environment and art. The teacher must at the same time foresee

which possibilities the local area can offer in connection with nature art, and which materials, techniques and forms of expression that can be exciting to work with at this selected place.



Lluís Sabadell Artiga, Pordenonne, Italia, "Processwork no 1", 2003.

This work consists in 3263 balls of clay mixed with bird food. The intention was to work out a process in two ways: as degradation-evolution of the balls which malting with the the rain leave uncovered the food for the birds so that they fall to eat it, producing an interaction between the work and the birds so that they become part of the work.

LLUIS SABADELL ARTIGA (Girona, 1974)

Bachelor in Fine Arts by the University of Barcelona and Master in Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Philosophy by the University Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) works as artist, curator, graphic designer and set designer. In 2005 creates the cultural association [Híbrids 2.0](#) to think about the relationship between nature, art, science and technology.

It is highly possible that this picture of Lluís Sabadells art works has inspired the students who made the work below.



Student project, Nord-Trøndelag University College, 2004, inspired by Lluís Sabadell Artiga (above)?

How has history, culture, topography, vegetation and nature elements set its distinctive mark on this place?

Which forms, lines, materials and colours can be found there?

How can this in turn inspire to form and composition?

Which choices of materials, techniques and modes of expression the location inspire to?

How can art play together with the material and ecological qualities of a place?

The initiation can in this context be started in the same way as in the example from the Norwegian-class, i.e. that the teacher initiates a project physically and aesthetically, and leaves it to be completed by the students/pupils on their own or in collaboration with the teacher.

Through the initiating and practical work, the senses will get nourishment. Studying pictures of art and “live art” by visiting artists, use of picture books, visiting art galleries, museums and initiating good conversation etc will all be appropriate to sharpen imagination, visualization and fantasy.

“At all times artists have copied the old masters. At the major art museums we frequently see art students drawing and painting in front of a masterpiece. This form of copying is not necessarily a stereotypic reproduction. It is rather a way of learning.” Quote from Juell & Nordskog : *Å løpe mot stjernene (Running towards the stars)*, 2006.

An example of this is the painting *Hermafrodite* by Odd Nerdrum, where he paints himself in the position of Munch’s *Madonna*, but with the anatomy of Michelangelos *Dying Slave*.

When teachers, pupils and kindergarten children swop ideas, the senses will be trained, as well as the inner imagery and the ability and motivation to be creative. The initiator must make the exercises open enough to make room for interpretation, enabling the participating children and youngsters to take part in the creative process.

With kindergarten children it is naturally necessary with a greater nearness between pupil and staff than in primary school. This nearness must always be present, but should gradually decrease as the children grow older. In lower secondary school it can therefore be recommended that the teacher moves from group to group, observes, asks questions, and throw forward suitable challenges.

Dialogue and wonder

When nature and art stimulate to wonder and explorative activities, new doors are opened for dialogue between children and teachers. Which forms, colours, materials or cultural-historical visual installations characterize this location? Is it characterized by trees, stones, moss, plants, running or still water, snow or ice? Does it bear traces of animals or people? What function does the place have, and how has it been used in earlier times? How did it look like before?

Furthermore, the location can invite to an imaginary escape, such as: If all the people in the area moved into a snow and ice environment in winter, how would the place look like? If the local children had playgrounds made of lattice from the thicket nearby, what would it look like? And how would it seem as a play area?

In the education of pre-school teachers for Reggio Emilia in the 1970's and 1980's, Loris Malaguzzi organized summer courses for the employees in Reggio Emilia's pre-schools, inviting Italy's leading artists. Both the world famous playwright and theatre instructor Dario Fo and the author of e.g. *The Grammar of Fantasy* Gianni Rodari have been seminar teachers at these summer courses. Both stressed the importance of language to form inner fantasy images.

When we examine, converse, ask and answer questions on the basis of enthusiasm and our own sensory impressions, our inner images become clearer. Focus on words and fantasy is transferred to all the aesthetic languages. Images become clearer and more distinctive the more aesthetic languages we let our senses pass through. Loris Malaguzzi's well known poem about childrens' infinite creativity illustrates this phenomenon:

*The child has a hundred languages, but they steal ninety-nine
The school and the culture separate the head from the body ...*

It's blowing in my hair!

For indigenous people living in natural environments, all perception is connected to their experience with nature. With perception I here mean sense impressions and experiences related to nature taken in through skin, hair, taste, smell, digestion, hearing, sight and touch. A process where the brain records and interprets signals and adds them to previous series of experiences, changing our behaviour pattern because we have learnt something new! In this way perception becomes linked with our personal experiences. But likewise, we can also make use of others' experiences, especially those that confirm or match our own.

We pass on experiences to each other through communication. We express ourselves orally and in writing, through images, symbols and mathematical signs, objects and buildings. People with a well developed ability to perceive nature will also develop a stronger ability to experience nature.

Regarding pre-school children, we often see that words come before concepts. It is through perception and experience we create the cognition words represent. The day we experience wind blowing in our hair, we can say: *It's blowing in my hair!* And realize what we are saying!

It's not without reason that while most Europeans only have one single word for snow, Norwegians have around 20 and Inuits probably the double. Even though it is a myth that they have hundreds of such words, it clearly shows that our surroundings have a strong impact on what we talk about!

A person with a high capacity for nature experience will probably become a person with an active positive view on nature – a person who develops an advanced ability to perceive and comprehend when nature is threatened by destructive forces. Therefore, it is important to find new strategies in order to strengthen our sensations and our ability to create in and with nature.

It will also be important to see, appreciate and become inspired by others' aesthetic works in interaction with nature. I think of nature artists, but also of crafts with roots in man's close

affinity with nature, such as the Inuits' ability to stack snow blocks, basket-makers' simple lattice-techniques which also appear in architecture and room art, not to forget the ancient Egyptians' superior masonry skills in building their pyramids and tombs.

Most of the exercises described in this book can be considered as examples on how we as teachers can strengthen children's perception regarding nature, nature art and crafts.

To see

In the 1980's, I had the privilege to study the art education in Reggio Emilia personally. In interviews made by Norwegian pre-school teacher students in Reggio Emilia in 1982 and 1984, the founder Loris Malaguzzi said that developing the ability to see and create images based on what we see is perhaps the most central method to develop the creative human being.

In order to study birds, it is important to concentrate on one type of bird species and focus on one single bird. This makes perception and identification possible. It is not to the same extent possible to see a flock of birds as to see one single bird. We can perceive and study one single bird as regards to shape, colour, movement on land and in air, way of life etc. This knowledge becomes intense and vivid and can be transferred to all other bird species. If the focus is on one bird it also becomes easier for children to identify with this single bird. In this way, the bird can inspire to impulses acted out through drama, movement, dance, sound, words and images.

Malaguzzi gave similar examples of children's studying of autumn's fallow leaves, investigating how they grow out of a branch, how they move as they fall, which colours they change into and how the leaves' nerves and colours form surfaces and patterns. With functions that resemble the human body's veins and a city's network of streets, where along veins and streets nutrients are transported to small cells and houses.

This becomes knowledge children can take with them into school and thereby take part in renewal of the botany teaching. In arts-based work with nature and environment great emphasis is laid on explaining this *seeing process*, and on developing skills in creating visual ways of expression.

According to the Finnish environmental artist and professor at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi in Finland, Timo Jokela, artistic-aesthetic learning involves observation, experience and increased sensory sensitivity:

"Observation is a core issue in interpreting and evaluating the environment. Our observations are based on the sum of our previous experiences and our expectations of the future."

Jokela claims that many of the phenomena brought to our consciousness through art can be understood as a sharpening of schemes of observation and activity:

"The romantic artist climbed a mountain and created an aerial perspective model of observation, teaching us to see the beauty of the dim shades of blue in the distance."

The impressionists led us to observe the colour of light determined by weather, and the beauty in the changes of natural phenomena."

Art creates new ways of observing, and examining art can act as a model for seeing one's own everyday surroundings in a new way, enriching one's knowledge, experience and understanding."

Like children

Norway's playful eco-philosopher Arne Næss claimed that through spiritual and psychological development we can learn to identify with other humans, animals, plants and eco-systems. We can learn to see ourselves in all living things, and they become part of our being.

By identifying with more than merely the human world, we want to protect it. We are not acting against our inclinations anymore, but in a way we see in small children.

The desire to act in respect with one's living surroundings is perhaps innate in human beings, or it is learned at a very early age. We might have to relearn the way children appreciate the things around them. If we were able to see life a little bit more like children, we would gain very much, Arne Næss asserted. To get into this state of children's inner life and way of thinking is a very difficult and important step in opposite direction of what normally is regarded as our development.

Keeping the impulse warm

In construction work as lattice, flower arranging, stone and snow block stacking and masonry it is crucial that young people master the different materials and craft techniques. This is important in order to get to know the various limitations, strengths and weaknesses of the different techniques. The material is best explored by repeated use in creative processes in interaction with craft techniques. It is probably more stimulating for each individual to be inspired by the local surroundings, by art and by the response from teachers and class mates, and then address new challenges within the same field, but now on the basis of richer experience. In such contexts the choice of material, technique and form is dependent upon the initiator and his/her need of expression.

In working with small children play is central in exploratory and creative work. Play can be organized by the teacher or emerge spontaneously during the work. Both are equally important.

The teacher should keep the initiator and the impulse warm by showing new possibilities. Children should experience an interaction between impressions and expressions. As they gather experience in the expressional field, they will be able to receive new impression impulses, which again enables them to handle greater aesthetic challenges. In this way we can attain more clarity in inner images and outer expression.

Aesthetic documentation

Aesthetic documentation implies to make something visible, with the intent to share it with others, i.e. make the experience collective in a visual and aesthetic manner. In this way the documentation becomes creation of culture as well as visualization of an existing culture.

Aesthetic educational documentation means telling a subject-related story to others in such a way that they can identify with or reflect upon what they see. It involves displaying practice in an aesthetic and visual way. In short, aesthetic documentation is documentation which aims to activate a larger part of our sensory repertoire.

Documentation in general deals with communication. You tell something by use of images, writing or spoken words. When we describe our experiences in words, we are forced to reflect upon them. When we see pictures from a trip we have been on, it helps us to remember what we have experienced, and it becomes easier to formulate this in words and in an aesthetic, visual form.

All visual and verbal repetition strengthen our memory of the original impulse. Conversation adds new nuances to our sensation of form, colour and movement, our ability to reflect and our thoughts.

Children who have participated in creative activity has something to tell others about both orally and in writing. They have concepts and substance behind their words.

Documentation which is seen by others, raises the status of our work, which again is a motivating factor for our next documentation work. Children who see their work documented feel that they stand on their own shoulders and take a leap forwards and upwards next time they create something.

There are four perspectives to documentation work: teachers, children, parents and community. The documentation creates positive effects in the environment around the children, the subject and the teachers. School/kindergarten and the aesthetic modes of expression become more significant for each individual child and for the community around them.

According to Hillevi Lenz Taguchi in her book *Varför Pedagogisk Dokumentation?*, 1998, documentation is a reflective way to relate to practice.

Through documentation of a child's aesthetic works in nature both the child's aesthetic activity and the teacher's didactic ideas and working method are visualized. The child will reflect upon the experience, and the parents can see what their child has participated in.

This type of documentation is one of the reasons behind Reggio Emilia's success towards Italian authorities, and the enormous influence the didactic ideas from the Po Plain has exerted on Western didactic thinking and development during the last 20 years. This topic is discussed by Anna Barsotti in *Skapende kommunikasjon i Reggio Emilia (Creative Communication in Reggio Emilia)*, 1997

No day without a hen blown to sea ...

A spring day with sun and a warm breeze. The winter clothes were packed away. The three-year-old came down the farm road on his tricycle. In sheer joy over life and the elements he cried: "It's blowing in my hair!" An exhilarating feeling we all recognize.

Perhaps it was this experience that inspired all the expressive drawings one year later, where his favorite motif was self-portraits with long hair fluttering in the wind.

I decided that *wind* would be a research theme for children in one of my kindergarten projects.

Borhaug Kindergarten at Lista, near the southernmost point in Norway, is situated on the outskirts of Borhaug right by an old lighthouse which now serves as an art gallery and a studio for the local artist Alfred Vågsvold.

Lista is a very wind-swept place where there is a local saying: “No day goes by without a hen being blown to sea at Lista!”

In light of my observation that children thoroughly enjoy the sensation of wind blowing through their hair, a windswept landscape and cultural traditions connected to this landscape, wind was chosen as a research theme at Borhaug Kindergarten.

The staff began by asking all 5- and 6-year-olds what they thought about the wind, where they were when it was windy and what they did. We modified and adapted an interview designed for 5-year-olds in Reggio Emilia’s kindergartens made at the end of the 1980’s by Anna Barsotti in her book *The City and the Rain*. The questions were brilliant in evoking the children’s fantasy images related to the subject, clearly inspired by the summer courses with Gianni Rodari.

We arranged a meeting between grandparents and kindergarten children where the elderly could tell stories from own childhood regarding what they used to do before when it was windy. As a result, one grandfather held a brief course in how to make a potato float in the air at Lista. Lots of hen feathers or sea gull feathers were inserted into a potato, so it became the core of a large feather ball. When it was thrown up in the air, the wind swept it away. When it fell down and bounced up in the air again, it once again was swept away by the wind. This toy became a new success at Lista in 1989.

Furthermore, children and staff at Borhaug Kindergarten erected a semicircle-shaped panel fence against the wind at a talus by the shore. This became a research station where the wind could be investigated through the children’s eyes, ears, skin and hair.

What does the wind look like?

What colour is the sky and sea?

What does the wind do with the water and pebbles and stones on the beach?

What does the wind do with trees and with us lying here?

How does the wind feel? Is it always cold?

We made a wooden frame of approx. one square meter, with poles to insert between the stones in the talus. From the upper edge of the frame there hang fish lines with different objects and materials. This could be glass, metal, pipes, tin cans, small stones, shells etc. Attached in such a way that they would dangle against each other or produce whistling sounds when the strings and materials moved in the wind. We called this structure a *wind harp*.

The children lay down in the “research station” and listened to all the new sounds which emerged.

The project continued by reading folk tales as for instance *The boy who went to the North Wind and demanded the flour back* by Asbjørnsen and Moe. Afterwards children and adults defined many different winds with different names and characteristics. Each child chose his/her own wind. The kind and warm pink south wind, the nasty and angry black north wind etc. The children gave their winds names and qualities. Subsequently, they were extra concentrated when they studied their own wind. They painted pictures and made up stories about their winds.

Questions asked to the whole group of children and to each child:

What do you think the North Wind looks like? Three times the North Wind took the boy's flour, but when the boy demanded the flour back, the North Wind said: "I don't have any flour." What do you think he had used it for? Where does the North Wind live? Does he have a house? What does it look like? Where is the North Wind today? What does he do? What does he say? Where is he going?

Extracts of the children's own fairy tales:

The North Wind:

Black as the rain.

His body full of air.

As a black cloud.

Black face.

With a pointed tail.

He is in his cave today. A dark old bear cave in Northern Norway, where they like wind. It is made of grass, stone and moss and some flowers. We can't see him, because he's so dark and the cave is dark.

Now he wants to bake a cake of the flour he stole from the boy. He kneads the dough without hands, just by blowing. Then he flies off into the sky and cooks the flour on a cloud]. He bakes the cake on the sun.

The cake is finished. He eats it without hands. He dips his whole head, his whole body into the pot and eats with a mouth we can't see. Some of the flour he blows away, and out of the rest he builds a house in the sky.

Full and satisfied he blows over Lista, makes a sieve on his stomach, and drops some of the flour. It is snowing. But the snow is wet. He has mixed the flour with some pee. It is cold.

He meets cars.

Blows clothes away.

Creates large waves, and sees a toy house with a frozen door.

Something is lying outside. He picks it up.

It was two spades, and he searches for more.

Through the forest he rushes.

Then he sees the kindergarten.

Then he sees the kids, and they are talking about him.

Now the North Wind is tired.

He lies down in a bedroom with no duvet, no pillow, and eats cake.

We showed the children pictures that resembled wind and weather, especially abstract contemporary art paintings by the artist John Reynolds from New Zealand. They looked for and found their own wind in these paintings. Then we hung up a one meter high and three meter long sheet of paper on the wall, in a comfortable working height for the children. They mixed their own colours which matched their own wind, and painted their wind. I made a video recording of this activity. The children made wind gestures in the air while painting, talking to their own wind. Afterwards we organized a drama situation where the children had made their

own masks and costumes, and where they one by one showed their wind, with themselves in the leading part.

The project lasted one whole year. The same interview as in the start of the year was repeated at the end of the year, showing that the children generally had gained a much more positive view of the winds at Lista. They now answered that windy weather made them want to go out and play, because they now knew who the wind was and what they could do together with it. Earlier they answered that they wanted to sit at home and watch TV.

Art exercises in nature

Professor Timo Jokela at the University of Lapland has a clear view on how environmental art can be applied as a method of environmental education. I have become acquainted with Timo Jokela through lectures at the University of Lapland and through articles and books, and not least through close cooperation regarding environmental art in snow and ice in Lainio Snow Village in Lapland in January 2007.

In this project I also worked together with doctorate student Jan van Boeckel from Amsterdam. After our collaboration, he wrote the article "Forget your Botany", see chapter "From interaction to despair" and list of references.

According to Jokela, different forms of environmental art are highly suitable for fieldwork and research practiced in the environment by learners in all ages. Based on didactic planning models that have been developed in art education, exercises are developed in which the pupil's phase of development and previous knowledge of the subject are taken into consideration. In the process, the art world and the pupil's world are combined. In one single project experiencing, searching for information, and structuring all merge together. All of them aim to increase one's sensitivity towards the environment.

Jokela distinguishes four categories of exercises that can be adapted as methods of arts-based environmental education:

- Exercises focusing one's observations
- Exercises which bring forward the processes happening in nature and help us to perceive them with greater sensitivity: growth and decay, the flow of water, the turning of day and night, the changes of light and wind etc.
- Exercises which aim to alter set ways of viewing the environment
- Exercises which test the limits of man and the environment

In the exercises, the 'chaos' of the environment can be organized according to certain chosen variables. The choice can be based on visual observations such as colour, form, size, or on tactile sensations such as soft or hard. Other choices could be based on cognitive concepts such as living versus lifeless, belonging to nature or left behind by humans.

An exercise could start by making observations, and continue with methods for comparison, classification and organizing.

To Jokela, well-suited starting points are archetypical symbols such as a circle, square, triangle, point, line, cross or spiral.

When the exercises are more process-focused, they could involve paths of movement and rituals in which the participant or viewer takes part. Movement and time create new spaces and environments. Such exercises lead to works that create a moment of change; movement and time create new spaces and environments.

One can ask a group to go outside and select a tree. Two members of the group then mention eight adjectives about the tree. Afterwards, two other members write a poem together using those adjectives. Then the pupils come back and read the poem to the whole group.

Another exercise might be that the group goes outside and each pupil picks up an object from nature without harming it. This could be a stone, a piece wood etc. They select the pieces according to how the object is felt to resemble themselves. After finding those objects, they come back and each tells in front of the group why they selected just that object.

When the goal of the exercises is to change the way in which one is common to see the environment, an exercise could be as follows: “Roughly sketch a line or circle on a map. Walk the distance of the line in nature. Stop every hundred meters and document and collect samples. Afterwards, analyse the differences between the experiences you gain this way and the preconceived impressions you had.”

Exercises that aim to test the human limits vis-à-vis the scale of the environment often have a communal, cooperative nature. The starting point is a large amount of material and the aim is to bring about a clear change in the environment. Suitable places are places where nature brings the material back into its cycle, such as beaches. An example could be an exercise where the task is to map the waves against the shore by use of small stones. When this has been done and the results documented, nature will move the stones back to their natural system.

A Finnish environmental art project

Sarianne Soikkonen, who is curator at the Kemi Art Museum and project supervisor for Migration Kemi, says in her article “Art as a builder of identity” this about professor Timo Jokela:

“By the time artist and professor Timo Jokela from the University of Lapland was starting his artistic career as a landscape artist, local identity in Lapland seemed to be low. People didn’t seem to value their own background. For him the North had always been the direction of possibilities. It was a port for hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, the source of a whole livelihood, and its forests were endless sources of stories”.

Timo Jokela addresses the question: How can art approach Northern local identity? He refers to works of environmental art and municipal art projects. From the beginning he has wished to explore how people could make use of their basic skills, their everyday experiences and habits in working with art. The aim was that everyday life in combination with different people’s skills and “the Northern way to be in the landscape” should attain new meanings and gain new respect through working with art. A circle was created: from everyday work to art, from art to stronger local identity.

Environment analysis

Jokela's projects start with an environmental analysis. Recollections, local history and local symbols are examined through discussion and work samples. The result of this process is that the work of art created by the artist and the local community combines cultural history and aesthetic and artistic values. Art works can for instance evolve from boat-building traditions into a visual symbol of a boat.

Identity

The publisher of the magazine Kaltio, Jussi Vilkkuna, agrees with Jokela in that art represents an important manifestation of identity, and that art is a way to visualize identity. Identity is always based on local culture, family, birthplace, environment and interpersonal communication.

An environmental art project

Timo Jokela describes a project he carried out together with students in a Sami agricultural village in Finnish Lapland in the autumn of 2005. Studies of literature, web sites and the history of the Sami people formed the basis of their choice of project:

"We became especially excited by ancient mythical beliefs and spell tradition connected with dairy farming," he says, and continues: "In addition, we were fascinated by the chance to make old traditions visible using concrete objects. We organized interdisciplinary field work, studying local history and stories. We made four willow cows. Willow fitted well into the structure of the place."

"The function of environmental art is to open viewer's eye to see the historical merit of the place and also the way it is used." (Jokela 1995)

Jokela then provides a detailed account of the construction of the art works. The local inhabitants were invited to assess and evaluate.

Jokela raises these questions:

- Do the local inhabitants see the connection between the past and the present?
- Could our environmental art be seen as something that activates the local community?
- Can it inspire the local community to create their own environmental art?

"Answers to these questions may come to us in the future," he states.

After completion they hoped the willow cows would survive winter. The whole process, which went on for a month, was a good exercise in cooperation and welded the student group together as a team. It also represented a good introduction to environmental art. The purpose of the art works was to enrich the local environment.

From interaction to despair

Jan van Boeckel believes that the loss of direct contact with nature might be one of the root causes for the ecological crisis we experience today, and for the mood of indifference many people feel for it. It is hard to care for something that we no longer perceive as being

constitutive to what makes us human. In his article “Forget your Botany, Developing Children's Sensibility to Nature Through Arts-based Environmental Education”, Van Boeckel says:

“To counter this development, an increasing group of educators thinks that education should facilitate a form of learning that enhances children's sensibility to nature and place.”

Van Boeckel continues: *“One effort in this direction has been the advance of what is called 'environmental education'. It is one of the challenges for environmental education to get children enthusiastic beyond the limited perspective that the natural sciences offer. On top of that it runs the risk of unintentionally conveying an ethics of 'guilt'. A one-sided focus on the scope and magnitude of today's environmental crises can cause feelings of personal inadequacy and even despair. The result can paradoxically be an even further detachment from nature, and a mindset that considers the act of reflection on the relation between humans and nature as a limiting endeavour, rather than something that can enrich one's life. If an ecological lifestyle is seen only as restriction and austerity, it will only be accepted as a last resort.”*

In The International Journal of the Arts in Society Jan van Boeckel quotes in his article “Forget Your Botany” professor Timo Jokela and professor Meri-Helga Mantere from the following articles:

- Jokela, Timo: “From Environmental Art to Environmental Education in Images of the Earth”, 1995
- Mantere, Meri-Helga (ed.) (Translated by: Maan Kuva), Helsinki, Finland, Yliopistopaino: “Writings on Art-based Environmental Education”, 1995 {maybe this part of just mentioning the literature does not add so much.}

Jan van Boeckel is a Dutch anthropologist, filmmaker and art teacher. Currently, he is engaged in a research project on arts-based environmental education at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, Finland. {I would start this part with this paragraph, introducing me}

Arts-based environmental education

It is here that a development in the Nordic countries can be of inspiration. Art is the key. In the beginning of the 1990's, a group of art educators in Finland, aware of the worsening ecological crisis, began to ask if art could help in the development of a more profound form of environmental education.

According to Meri-Helga Mantere, who first coined the term 'arts-based environmental education' in 1992, it is a method that *“supports fresh perception, the nearby, personal enjoyment and pleasure of perceiving the world from the heart. It aims at an openness to sensitivity, new and personal ways to articulate and share one's environmental experiences, which might be beautiful but also disgusting, peaceful but also threatening.”*

In short, aesthetic environmental education is grounded on the belief that sensitivity to the environment can be developed by artistic activities. Motivation to act for the good of the environment is based above all on positive and valued experiences which are often of an aesthetic nature. In the view of Mantere, these experiences can be generated by open and immediate contact with nature and the often new and fresh view of such phenomena that art

provides. Arts subjects can develop a positive image for a way of life that conserves nature. This requires a great deal of inventiveness, joy and dignity. To Meri-Helga the connections are obvious: *“The early experiences of nature in childhood, the ability as an adult to enjoy these experiences, comprehending the value of the richness and diversity of nature, and the need and energy to act on behalf of nature and a better environment are all interdependent.”*

In different degrees of intensity art activities have a tendency to reach the sensory, perceptual, emotional, cognitive, symbolic and creative levels of human beings. They can sharpen and refine our perception and make us sensitive for the mystery of the things around us. Through that we may experience the world, nature and people in such a way as if we see them for the first time. In the context of learning about nature, art thus has a potential that conventional approaches lack. Jan van Boeckel says in “Forget Your Botany”:

“By orienting one's personal artistic responses to the sensuous natural environment, one has an opening to embrace our living connection to the world. Through art we can see and approach the outside world afresh.”

Jan van Boeckel is a Dutch anthropologist, visual artist, art teacher and filmmaker. One of Jan's areas of interest and concern are the worldviews and environmental philosophies of indigenous peoples. Together with filmmaking group ReRun Productions, he produced a series of documentaries on this subject, as well as films on philosophers such as Jacques Ellul and Arne Naess, who provide a critical analysis of the Western way of life. These films include, among others: *The Earth is Crying* (1987), *It's Killing the Clouds* (1992), *The Betrayal by Technology* (1992), and *The Call of the Mountain* (1997).

Jan has lived for several years in Hällefors, in the forests of central Sweden, where he was an art teacher to both children and adults, and consultant on international cultural projects. He established the Cloudberry Dreams network with partners in Latvia, England, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The mission of this partnership is to share ideas and to explore new ways to interpret landscapes through art and creativity. Another project he took part in conceptualizing is called *Clearings in the Forest*, which focuses on the cultural and mythical significance of open spaces in the woodlands.

Between 2004 and 2006 Jan has worked as Head of Communications at the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples in Amsterdam.

Currently Jan van Boeckel is research assistant at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, where he is focusing on the added value of art practice in the context of nature and environmental education. Inspired by indigenous peoples' cultures, his own engagement in art and art teaching practices, and his experiences of living close to wilderness areas of Sweden, Jan's interest has moved to art as a means to connect to what David Abram aptly called 'the more-than-human-world'.

Jan's latest research is on the tensions between trying to 'open the senses' whilst coping with the current ecological crisis. An issue all the more pressing when working with children.

One of the practices Jan is developing at this moment is “Wildpainting”

At these painting courses, participants draw and paint in nature. Wildpainting means two things: to paint wilderness and wild landscapes, and to paint in a different, surprising way. The aim is to open up to the aesthetics and the energies of the landscape through trying to see (and smell, know etc.) as if one perceives it for the first time. It means basically to dare to draw and paint in quite a different way than we are accustomed to: leaves don't always have to be green and the sky not eternally blue. Instead the participants tried to observe afresh, deeper and deeper, letting the motive come to them as they experienced it there and then. In

that way, the artistic process because something between meditation and perceiving the world in the way a child does. The courses usually last five hours per day, for five days with regular breaks for tea and coffee, for lunch, or for taking some time to talk about what had happened to that point. Every participant gets also personal comments and advice from the course facilitator.

There is no demand of having prior artistic skills. What is needed is the enthusiasm to participate and a desire to learn something new, and to dare to participate in this process. The inspiration to the Wildpainting courses comes from painter Paul Cézanne, who wrote: "The landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness."

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Aesthetics and nature art

Aesthetics in a creative process

Aesthetics is about the ability to be awakened by sensory impulses, and to make esthetical choices based on this. Herein lies as well our faculty of curiosity, of sensory awareness, sense stimulation, cognition as well as sensitivity, openness and perception. How we perceive new ideas and trends and how we are able to develop our own personal form for expression and a personal style. In this regard aesthetics become a basis for creativity.

Perception theories play a major role within the realms of arts and craftwork, where we read the brains' desire to create meaningful connections between the countless sensory impulses which we are bombarded with.



The five year old girl on the left is on a beach trip with her kindergarten. She finds a virginal part of the beach which literally invites her to imaginative play with lines drawn with a stick in raw sand. Randvika, Risør 1999. The other two photos show HiA-students' play with lines and natural forms at Hove, Tromøy 1999

Through sensory impulses inner images and form are created. The strength of the impulses and our emotional reactions to them determines the strength of expression and the intensity of the aesthetic expression. In this interaction we find the creative impulse.

In our world of linguistic concepts we find a contrast to aesthetics in *an-aesthetics*, such as in the anaesthetic departments in hospitals where they are able to tranquilize and sedate, so that we will not think, feel or react for a period. It is precisely receiving outer sensory stimulation and our awareness of it which lay the foundation for our inner aesthetic cognition, for aesthetic deeds and expressions.

In nature art this touches on our cognitive perception of lines, form, material and texture in our environment. It also concerns sensitivity and awareness of communication with our surroundings, the seasons, local cultural history and the art which has been created throughout time based on interaction with these areas.



My own artwork in Pølevann, Denmark 2003

In nature art there is a genuine concern that human beings and nature communicate on nature's terms. Artistic expressions can therefore be transient like wind, waves and ripples in water. The art works are made in harmony with the elements and seasons at their mercy and subject to decay.

Equally often we experience in nature art that the same forces that decompose also create new life. Consequently, many of our aesthetic structures made in harmony with nature's elements and materials gradually will be taken over by nature as form and expression where new life grows simultaneously as something disintegrates. We then talk about environmental art or eco-art (see chapter "Terms related to nature art").

Documentation of aesthetic activity in nature is central in nature art. For schools and kindergartens this means basic photo editing, work with photo montages, simple descriptions, discussion of art works by use of photographs etc. In short, a solid and basic basis for theme or project work.

The assignments given deal with *seeing nature* by accentuating lines, forms and colours in the landscape with a new form/colour, with flowers, straws, feathers, stones etc., or by using complimentary colours, for instance rowan berries on green moss. "Magic circles" are made, and spirals and mazes with contrasting materials against the background. The participants make colour circles or shades of colour using autumn leaves, model strict three-dimensional forms in sand or snow with forms and colours repeated in different rhythms and variations.

In 1997 a group of pre-school teacher students from HiA experimented with three-dimensional architectonic forms made of raw and unprocessed wood materials in the forest,

such as pyramids, spheres, ellipses, inclined planes, hammocks etc. using lashing, weaving and plaiting techniques. The students were also given assignments of a more fantasizing nature, as sky ladders, reed boats and “rooms for fertility”.

The students took photographs, wrote poems and prose, scanned and enlarged photographs and made aesthetic montages with pictures and text for presentation in an exhibition.



Student project, pre-school teacher training, HiA, Hove, Tromøy 1997

Aesthetic principles and effects in nature art

Point and line

One small point has enough visual power to attract the eye's attention and serve as a starting element. When a point is stretched out or is repeated in rapid succession, it is called a line. A line can be active, passive, positive or negative. Lines can in human perception run together and appear as form.

In an interdisciplinary project in pre-school teacher training I asked a group of students to study an ant as it wandered around in nature. I asked them to lay down a rowanberry for every *step* it took. A rowanberry shone like a red-orange light complementary to the green grass. This berry, one more and yet another formed a line.

The line continued towards a stone. Would the ant cross the stone? No, around the stone and towards a tree. It climbed up this tree.

The students felt they had studied the ant long enough, and the rowanberries formed an organic line which followed the laws of nature in the terrain. In other words, the easiest path to take for an ant, without forgetting its destination!

We could make similar lines in nature by following for instance moose tracks. Each track could be a large point filled with rowanberries. In our perception we would draw a line between the tracks through the terrain.

Below we see nerve lines in a leaf highlighted and accentuated by flowers. We rediscover lines through aesthetics!



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Mosby School, Kristiansand 2005



Artwork made by 8th class pupils from Mosby School at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, Kristiansand 2005

Colour

Colour will always be central in this context. How colour can create and influence form. How colours influence each other and the form when they are placed next to each other etc. It is mainly due to the colours that the spiral line above appears so distinct against a background consisting of the same stones the spiral is made of.

Colour is a phenomenon in nature that makes different biological species attracted to a form. We humans find colours in nature beautiful, some forms are tempting to eat, others we find dangerous due to their colour. Other species find their congeners exactly because of their colours' strong signals in nature. Colors in nature can of course be used according to the same principles as in a painting. In his colour theory, Johannes Itten addresses this issue with regard to design and image. Colours in nature rouse great excitement and often inspire us to make use of them for decorative purposes.



From Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden. Artwork by 8th class pupils from Møvig School, Kristiansand 2005

Surface, plane and form



Sundial on the island Jorma made by students at the University of Art and Design, Helsinki 1996.

The space between length and width is called a plane. A plane can be a surface, an area, a field or a side of a voluminous form. The plane then represents a positive form. Planes can also be represented in for instance the spaces between trees, or in shades of trees on the ground.

Our attention can be drawn towards the plane's surfaces, edges or inner structures. The circle, triangle and square are the most common plane forms. A plane is the basis of all other forms.

In the artworks by Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo we find examples of work with the basic forms, for instance rows of corollas laid inside a rectangular frame on water, or intertwined leafs held up as a rectangle against the sunlight. Or as a rectangular block of ice, where circular steps have been cut into the ice, each outside the other, escalating towards more and more transparency from the outer to the inner circle.



From Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, by 8th class pupils from Fiskå School, Kristiansand 2005

Volume

When length, width and depth are represented in a form, we call it a volume. A volume can be positive or negative (the space between). It can be solid or filled with air. It can be visible or virtual. It can be in a state of rest or motion.

We talk about positive volumes when for instance massive tree trunks split into branches. The space between them becomes a negative volume. This space invites to creative activity, and can be filled with for example lattice, flowers or fruit.



Hove, Tromøy, February 2007

Variation as aesthetic principle

Pictorial artist and author Lillian Garrett has in her book *Visual Design, a problem-solving approach* summarized an artist's experiences and ideas regarding composition of nonfigurative art. Her book is a classic within interpretation and understanding of non-figurative and abstract art.

If we study photographs of land art made by for instance Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo, we see that Lillian Garrett's variable theories are highly applicable tools for analysis and understanding. She claims that aesthetics in art involves varying the effects applied.

I would like to add that it involves varying in the way nature varies the "effects" present in a natural scene. Through variation of form, colour, size etc. we can create life and vibrancy in a work of art which might be completely abstract in composition and expression.

Size

In nature, the maximum and minimum size of a form within a system is dependent on the system laws. Maple leaves share the same basic form, they can be small and large, but within the maple leaf-system laws.

Lines can be wide, narrow, long and short. Size is a relative concept. A long line looks even longer besides a short line, a small point or surface looks even smaller besides a large point or surface.



Student project, Oslo University College 2003. Photo: Ytterstad and Fønneboe

Form

A form is defined by a mass' outer boundaries. Three-dimensional forms are bounded by two-dimensional surfaces like the branches of a tree. Two-dimensional forms are bounded by one-dimensional borders or lines, like roots crossing a forest path.

The form of a line can be straight or curved. The form of a surface or a volume can be defined by straight lines or surfaces.

Form can be defined by curved lines or surfaces. An angular form can be varied towards a circle or a triangle. A circular form can be varied towards a triangle or a square etc.



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Haumyrheia School at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, Kristiansand 2005

Position

Horizontal, vertical and diagonal are primary positions for forms in a space. A form's position can be three-dimensional – we can see it, touch it and move around it, maybe even move about inside it if it is spacious enough. A form's position can also be defined as for instance in perception of volume on a two-dimensional surface. Like the other variables each change in position will have an impact on the element which moves, on its relation to the other elements and to the total space. The forms' positions in relation to each other can be arranged in a row, parallelly, diagonally, horizontally, vertically, overlapping etc. A form can be placed along the edge of another form, at the top or bottom or some place between. The form can touch the neighbouring form's edge and thereby be exposed to the force this causes, or it can stand freely some place within the other form's surface/space.

Direction

When a form's position involves movement, it is considered as movement in a direction. The direction of the movement can be vertical, horizontal, diagonal, away from, towards, back and forth, increasing, decreasing, into, out of, over, under, around, through, rightwards, leftwards, convergent, divergent, in spiral movement, rotating etc.

Direction is created when forms with fairly similar shape point the same way, as the branches of a tree or ripples in water or sand. In this way, lines and directions can also constitute form.

Besides the movement vi can sense in the photograph above we can also feel the expression's poetic power.

Variation of form, position and direction is seen in the photos below.



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Haumyrheia School at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, Kristiansand 2005

Number

One single form can be repeated few or many times. The number can vary from one to many, where “many” can vary from a few to the infinite.

Forms can be arranged in a certain order or series, such as a natural order, a change or progression. They can appear in a fixed order or in random order. The variation of number can be perceived as groups with similar form of different number in each group. Within these groups, the form itself may have developed variations. Such variables are found in the works by Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo.



Variation of form, position, direction and number. Student project, Oslo University College. Photo: Ytterstad and Fønnebøe 2003

Spaces in-between and density

In Andy Goldsworthy's nature art we see how he works systematically with repetition of a form (*Touching North*, 1988). When this is done in nature with nature's materials, the repetition never becomes stereotype. It becomes a living organism where the forms constitute spaces in-between which become negative volumes, repeated in similar way as the positive.

Texture

In working with sculpture you may have experienced how vital it is that different surfaces in a sculptural form are depicted with different surfaces or textures. Through texture the form's surfaces are given life.

The shadows of trees on the forest floor can be depicted with materials like cones, sticks, mushrooms or berries. In this way we can make new textures and new forms. After a while, the shadow moves, and the texture and form represent a contrast to the tree and the new shadow. Furthermore, light/shadow, negative and positive volumes etc will also influence our perception, in addition to an intentional alternation of the variables mentioned above.

Formal aesthetics is an important basis for design and art. But we must not forget that the content or idea we wish to express in a picture or a sculpture, or the function intended for a designed form, must be decisive for the form and composition we finally give our piece of art.

The American artist Ben Shahn's book *The Shape of Content* (1960) has become influential in the art world. One central thesis in modernism is that form is the content.

Repetition

When studying various natural environments, we see that ocean waves repeat in the same way as desert sand and mountain snow. The wind moves the materials, and a combination of wind, materials and the local environment create repetitions of forms which look almost identical, without being identical, rhythms which seem identical, yet are slightly different.

We recognize the phenomenon in mountain crevices, in bark cracks on trees, in the network of roots on the ground etc. The ice on puddles in the forest on a clear and snow free autumn day cracks into squares and triangles when we tread on them, in the same way as a thin slate of stone. They crack into basic shapes and form a basis for a cubistic approach to art.

In photographs of works of art by for instance Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo, we see how they often repeat a form in various ways. Either by repeating a material's form or by making a form which is repeated. We frequently see them doing both in the same piece of art.



This artwork can represent variation in form, space in-between/density, repetition of form and texture. From a staff seminar in Elisabethstua Kindergarten, Grimstad 2005

Within all categories of nature art we find simplification into basic forms. Consequently, squares, triangles, spirals, cubes, pyramids etc. are popular forms in these branches of art.



Student project, pre-school teacher training, HiA, Dømmesmoen 2005



Students and child, pre-school teacher training, HiA, Dømmesmoen 2005

Read more about aesthetic effects in the chapters "Land art and nature art", "Environmental art", "Site-specific art" and "Performance art".

Land art and nature art

In the 1960's some artists started to react against the increasing commercialism of art. They wished to separate art from market forces and financial concerns by creating stronger ties between art and nature. In this way, art could highlight nature and ecology and at the same time benefit from a free scope regarding new aesthetic principles in art, where artists could work in harmony with nature. Artists should cooperate with the landscape and the environment and also focus on and liberate aesthetics. The works of art could either be exhibited in nature or by means of photographs or video recordings in organized viewings.

In this context we could mention internationally renowned artist as Richard Long, Peter Hutchinson, Dennis Oppenheim, Jeanne-Claude and Christo. The two last-mentioned have often brought materials out in nature, even synthetic materials such as cloths of nylon or plastic, wrapped islands and buildings in synthetic fabric or erected a tall fabric fence running through a hilly landscape in California, the so-called *Running Fence*. In this way they highlight lines and forms in the landscape and in architectonic forms, such as the Reichstag building in Berlin, which was wrapped in fabric.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude are very interesting and ground-breaking in art history, but in connection with teaching in arts and crafts they evidently raise many didactic questions, especially as far as upbringing is concerned.

The land art work below by Andy Goldsworthy evoke great enthusiasm and inspiration in the 1990s.



Goldsworthy is especially concerned with visualizing aesthetic principles and effects applied in nature. The quiet and dark forest lake as a background provides an optimal aesthetic effect.

The Norwegian section of the international aesthetics network within teacher training, established at Hjørring Seminarium in Denmark in 1992, chose to work with land art, inspired by the British artist Andy Goldsworthy, Krakamarken near Randers in Denmark and KIN at Lillehammer in Norway. The same applied to the Nordic ESJA Network, established at Agder University College (HiA) in 1992, which in 1998 organized a Nordic travelling exhibition showing how children and artists from various parts of the Nordic countries worked *To create in and with nature*, which the exhibition was called.

I make use of concepts and definitions applied in contemporary art when artists make art in nature. I will supplement the explanation of concepts by including my own experiences from my aesthetic work during my research year, and through many years as lecturer in arts and crafts with creative activity in nature, in general teacher and pre-school teacher training at HiA.

Before I started my research in 2003, I used to call my work with students land art-inspired art. In the course of my research year, I increasingly began to elaborate on my use of concepts in this field.

Terms related to nature art

On the home page of *greenmuseum.org* there are definitions of the terms used in connection with art in nature. Sam Bower, the executive director of this web-museum, wished to make simple and useful definitions, inviting the users of the museum to elaborate on the definitions with their own experiences. This is precisely what I wish to do. Bower claims that many artists and critics using the museum confuse the terms *environmental art*, *eco-art*, *ecological art*, *econvention*, *land art*, *earth art*, *earthworks* and *art in nature*. The web-museum use *environmental art* as an umbrella term to encompass these terms.

Terms within nature art

Attempt at clarifying terms by Sam Bower, executive director of *greenmuseum.org*

Environmental art is a wider concept than *ecological art* and incorporates the environment or environments on Earth, from outer space and down to the various ecosystems. The natural decay of these artworks was seen as part of the ecosystem's existence. Therefore, the term *land art* was eventually widened to encompass the term environmental art, now more and more often called *nature art*.

The term *eco-art* (contraction of *ecological art*) is more suited as a term for contemporary art expressions in nature than the term land art, as we can see an increasing ecological awareness in the artistic expression and use of materials. "Ecological" refers to living organisms in nature and their mutual dependence. Furthermore, *eco-art* refers to the connection between different environmental factors in different ecosystems, and art in light of this context. The contraction "eco-art" is more catchy than "ecological art". Written in lowercase with the dash, "eco-art" seems more humble and simple than "Eco Art".

"eco-art" is a contemporary art movement which addresses environmental issues and often involves collaboration and restoration of polluted or damaged ecosystems. Artist often

use materials found on the site, re-organize, aestheticize and let the elements decompose the artworks as if they were part of the vegetation. Moreover, the artistic expressions often interact with local culture and history.

The eco-artist Erica Fielder, who wants to encourage deeply personal relationships with the wild, says that science and technology have given us all the tools and know-how we need to halt environmental destruction today. But what is missing is a feeling of kinship and empathy that motivates us to include the health of our planet in our everyday decisions.

Fielder demonstrates this kinship between man and nature with her “Bird Feeder Hat”. This is a wide-brimmed, brushy hat made by twigs and heath inserted into a wig, and then covered by berries and bird seeds. He or she who wears the hat, must sit so still that he/she can feel the movement of birds on the hat. The experience is vivid and sensory, and provides an opportunity to begin experiencing a deeper kinship between man and a wild creature.

Restoration art is another which refers to art which “restores” polluted or damaged ecosystems and landscapes. This would be considered a form of “eco-art”.

Coined in 1999, the term *econvention* (ecology + invention) describes an artist-initiated project that employs an inventive strategy, and might probably be defined as part of “eco-art”.

The term *art in nature* is used more often in Europe than in the USA, and refers more to Nils-Udo and Andy Goldsworthy-style work creating beautiful forms (usually outdoors) with natural materials found on-site such as flower petals, leaves, stones, twigs, snow and ice. These artworks might also be seen as legalization of small performances in nature, as demonstrated by Ana Mendieta, who emphasizes a more personal and feminist engagement with the Earth.

Many of these performances are documented in photographs which are then sold in galleries, a strategy employed by many “art in nature”-artists with their often highly aesthetic works as photo objects.

“Art in nature”-projects are usually of a smaller scale than *land art*. It has been more common outside the USA to use the term “land art”, which suggests art made outdoors, in local surroundings or places.

The term *crop art* is used to describe large images made in agricultural fields. They are best seen from great heights and are photographed from the air.

Environmental art

This term has, among others, been defined by Clive Adams, Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (an Internet-based centre for environmental art in Exeter in England). I take the liberty to quote freely from the centre’s home page:

“From prehistoric times, peoples have transformed the environment, by shaping their tools from stone, by decorating their cave walls with paintings/using blood, earth and fat, by building megaliths and stone circles, seeking ways to connect with the divine and mystic forces of nature. Since those times, artists and designers have been profoundly influenced by the images, colors, patterns, structures and systems of nature around them.

At times of turbulent change in our history, as in Hellenistic Greece, medieval Japan and Europe at the time of industrial and political revolution, new art forms have emerged in order to address the changing relationships between nature and society.

During the political and social upheavals of the 1960s, a group of artists in the United States and Europe increasingly questioned the restriction of painting. They experimented with radical new ways of responding to the environment and its ecology. Rather than paint the landscape, their experiences were realized by sculpting the land itself, by photographic sequences and in sculpture made from natural materials."

This was called land art. Clive Adam continues:

Since the turn of the Millennium, world concern over environmental issues such as pollution and global warming, species depletion, new genetic technologies and new epidemics has increased. Artists are responding by developing more active roles in environmental issues.

In environmental art, artistic expressions interact with natural environments, ecology and culture. Within the Nordic countries, it is particularly Timo Jokela, professor at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi in Finland, who have defined the term environmental art. He says:

"Many works of environmental art can be seen as environmental processes which aim to change environmental attitudes on an individual or community level."

He refers to examples of European environmental art by artists like Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long, whose connection to nature is respectful, almost sacral:

"It is as if the work refers to nature's own beauty or significance. The work of art opens one's eyes to see something ordinary and everyday in a new way. This way of work refines one's perceptions and makes one more sensitive to the environment. Here the borderline between art and philosophy are disappearing. Environmental and environmental philosophy merge together."

I have had the pleasure to attend some of Jokela's lectures, in addition to reading several articles and books he has written on this subject. According to Jokela, environmental art is one means by which people rearrange the environment. It reflects its maker's, user's and the existing society's values and relationships to the environment.

Environmental art plays a specific role in altering the environment. The motivation of a work of art rises solely from the environment. The form, materials and even the birth process of the work takes the location into account.

Jokela remarks:

"The surrounding space itself may act as an artistic element. This requires that the birth process begins with a close orientation to the location: sitting, watching, smelling, walking – in other words a holistic exploration of the place. Usually the process also includes orienting to the history of a place, the stories it tells, and the meanings given to it by its users."



Timo Jokela made this artwork in the mountains near Kirkenes in 2005. Read more about Jokela's philosophy and ideas on didactic environmental art in the chapters "Art exercises in nature" and "A Finnish environmental art project".

Clearly, the concept "environmental art" invites to interaction between present and previous cultures and cultural expressions. Some basic examples could be the various aesthetic expressions in wood stacking. After many years with merely functional woodstacks in and around my home town in Southern Norway, we have the recent years benefitted from labour done by a group of woodcutters from Estonia. They have attracted attention with their beautiful woodstacks shaped as spheres, pyramids, columns and cubes. A local farmer allied himself with one of the woodcutters and a local artist. Together they cultivated these aesthetic forms, which were presented in our local media. This revealed public interest in environmental art, a sign of enthusiasm, but perhaps also of an aesthetic longing.

In a culture where a tradition is simplified to pure functionalism, or where a form tradition dies out because the function no longer is in demand, we often see that the older form reappears as an element in an environmental art-project.

In addition to woodstacks, I could mention haydrying racks and haycocks, fish drying racks, cog-jointed buildings, Sami tents, turf huts and drying racks, wickerwork, stone masonry, flagstone laying etc.

Site-specific art

Site-specific art is artwork created to exist in a certain place. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork. Like in environmental art (a closely related art form), the artwork is planned and made to exist in a certain location. Therefore, outdoor site-specific artworks often include landscaping combined with permanently sited sculptural elements. Outdoor site-specific art also include dance performances created to exist in a certain place. Here, the choreographer uses the site as inspiration for the choice of repertory regarding costumes and movements. Some artists make a point of performing music created by a local composer especially for the dance site. Indoor site-specific artworks may be created in conjunction with or by the architects of the building.

More broadly, the term is sometimes used for any work that is more or less permanently attached to a particular location. In this sense, a building with interesting architecture could be considered a piece of site-specific art

Some artists producing site-specific works include Robert Smithson, Andy Goldsworthy, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Nils-Udo and Alfio Bonnanno,

In pre-school teacher training at UiA we have for some years organized study trips to Barcelona. We have focused our attention on three great artists in Barcelona – Gaudi, Miro and Picasso. More than any others, these three artist have left their mark on Barcelona. Not only in terms of art collections, architecture and parks, but also in marketing of tourism, means of transport, souvenirs etc. It is natural to assert that these artists' spirit, essence and soul hover above Barcelona.

Following visits to the Picasso Museum and the Park Güell, we gathered the students on the beach, and divided them into groups of four. Each group was given a card showing an artwork by Picasso or Gaudi with a three-dimensional character. The students were encouraged to gather sand, pebbles of various character, colour and size and shells, bottle shards etc. Strictness in form and expression was emphasized in presenting the assignment.

After around one and a half hour's intense effort, the groups presented these works:



Student project, pre-school teacher training, UiA, Barcelona 2008



Student project, pre-school teacher training, UiA, Barcelona 2008, with tracks from local seagulls crossing the right side of the sand relief

Performance art

Performance art differs from traditional art in that performers give the artworks a dimension of real life. This is an art form which encompasses time and space, and is performed by the artist on the location, and according to the artist's own idea.

Other terms related to performance art is concept-art, live-art, action and happening.

The term performance art or performance is not only applied in the visual arts. It can also be used in connection with other art forms, like theatre, music, literature, film and dance. This demonstrates one of the main characteristics of performance, when for instance a pictorial artist make use of other modes of artistic expressions, by applying effects which not traditionally have been connected to visual arts. Inspiration from interdisciplinary collaboration has contributed to develop all the implicated art forms.

Performance art has opened for direct reaction regarding art, culture, society and nature. The meeting with the audience is direct, as opposed to the distanced form traditional art exhibitions represent. Actions challenge the audience, and the artists expose themselves to groundbreaking and untraditional experiences.

Institutions dealing with visual arts and education have been reluctant in acknowledging performance art due to its ephemeral character, which also often is free from materially manufactured products.

Documentation for posterity has often been inadequate. Aesthetic visual documentation in the shape of photos, photo exhibitions, film and video is therefore of vital importance when such ephemeral artistic expressions are concerned, in line with the new educational areas of commitment.

Between heaven, foot and rock ...

Site-specific art og performance art as tools for creating identity



Lower secondary school pupils from Eide School in performance art work, Homborsund 2008

The education centre Eide oppvekstsenter, The County Governor for Aust-Agder County and Grimstad Municipality have recently carried out an art project called *Nature aid* at Eide School in Homborsund

My task was to lead a workshop within land art for 17 lower secondary school pupils in the landscape at Homborside with a viewing of an aesthetic expression through so-called performance art the following day.

With a somewhat ambitious title as *Nature aid*, the art project raises new kinds of expectations as regards choice of theme, expression, materials and technical solutions. My aim was that the pupils attending my workshop should participate in an aesthetic mode of expression comprising nature, culture and time. The activity would take place within a limited time perspective, yet leave an impression in the participants' mind, almost like lived experience. The rest could be recorded in digital media as photo or video.

I wished to take the young participants on a journey in the world of art, where they not necessarily grasped the scope of all they did until late in the process. I hoped they would get an aha-reaction during the work. This work should be artist-initiated in the sense that a competent leader with an idea or an environment with an aesthetic background is responsible for planning and implementation. Both the leader and pupils will be dependent on each other if the idea is to be implemented as described below.

Felt between feet and rock

On the chosen location furthest out on the headland a gale was raging. We had to re-locate our main base to the car park 150 meters further down, on the north side of the headland. From this base camp, we would make an advance towards the headland after some preparatory measures.

I started by telling about Mongolian tents made of felted wool. I also elaborated on my hypothesis that wild sheep changing pelt, tread and urinate in it while the wool is exposed to high and low temperatures. Urine and lanoline combined makes soap, and in this way a felting process is created.

Together we rolled out brown carded wool on the asphalt, two or three layers on top of each other, approximately 4 meters in length. We sprinkled these wool strips with hot soapy water and danced on them to folk-rock rhythms. For a while they were covered by bubble wrap, which also was danced on while wool and plastic constantly were sprinkled with more soapy water.

Now, the felt was firm enough to be rolled together and transported up to the rock slope in a wheel barrow. There, the felt strips were rolled out on the rock surface, with the cracks and bumps that were present, and now without the bubble wrap.

The aim was that the rock surface should leave its imprint on one side and the pupils' foot prints on the other. If we examine coastal rock slopes in Norway, we see local characteristics marked by textures and lines created by glacial abrasion, waves, lava flows and other geological phenomena.



Imprints from the rock surface on one side and footprints on the other. Lower secondary school pupils from Eide School in performance art-work, Homborsund 2008

A new round of folk-rock-rhythms followed. Moreover, the participants were asked to wrap red coloured felted wool around boulders – materials present in the local environment. I brought along boulders, to avoid using the local protected ones. The felt strips had been matted in a washing machine to make them more solid and then dried in a sauna.

Felt in performance art

Five young participants from the previous day had a felt strip wrapped tightly around their body from shoulder to knee. Four brown-clad and one red-clad. They were asked to go behind a small hill around 10 meters from the site where felt strips had been imprinted the day before.

The boulders clad with red felted wool were along with ordinary boulders laid along one crevice which formed a line in the rock. This line in nature was accentuated and highlighted by boulders, in keeping with land art traditions. Such, the stones served as a scenographic effect in the same environment where the performance was to take place.

The youngsters received a brief introduction to local history with emphasis on a large burial mound from the Bronze Age. This lies in the background as a monumental and cultural effect. After a brief choreography, the pupils came walking, appearing as silhouettes against the sky on the top of the hill. Then they stopped, and in a freeze-position they scouted out across the sea. Then they took off their shoes, walked a few meters along the rock slope and scouted once more in a freeze-position, barefooted in felted wool with imprints from the very same rock slope they stood on.



Lower secondary school pupils from Eide School in performance art-work, Homborsund 2008

Did they scout forwards or backwards? A question the pupils also asked themselves in the summing up afterwards. One of the participants said that the felt-costume gave a feeling of belonging to another era. Another said that the performance gave a feeling of being stone age people, but also a feeling of being future people.

One of the members of the audience asked the young performance-participants to reflect upon the difference between people living thousands of years ago and modern people. They all said that under felt or ordinary modern clothes we look precisely the same as thousands of years ago. They all agreed that the experience of dressing in felt brought about unexpected thoughts and reflections.

Several styles of art combined ...

The projects I describe further on, involves land art, environmental art, site-specific art and nature art. But it could also be labeled eco-art, and can sometimes border on performance art.

At times, my work with students involves exclusively aesthetic two- and three-dimensional works in nature using local materials, i.e. land art. In these cases, it would be easier and for many more understandable to use the term *nature art*. A term I feel is easily understood and less pretentious.

The work with foot matting started in Gullbring Kindergarten in Bø in Telemark County in March 2008. We learnt that matting with naked feet on the bathroom floor was completely ok for three-year-olds.



The rocks fingerprint

I continued with foot matting in the landscape in Bjørndalen in Nesna in Nordland County in May 2008. I wished to make young people aware of how local culture through the ages has interacted with nature, and how local cultural phenomena as felting of wool, especially in Nesna, can emerge in new forms in work with land art.

Nesna can boast long traditions in making *nesnalobber*, footwear for winter-use made of matted wool from sheep. Today, nesnalobber are manufactured in Estonia. However, it is in Nesna this tradition emerged and the products developed. The matting process is as described in the previous chapter.



The rock in Bjørndalen with its deep furrows made its imprint in the felt

At the harbour in Nesna I erected a structure of poles which resembled a boat with a mast. The question was: Could the foot matted local felt be constructed to something resembling sails in this installation? If it could be constructed in such a way that people passing by could sense the rock and foot texture, and simultaneously, through gaps in the “sail”, be able to see the distant mountains at Tomma, Hugla and Handnesøya in a new context, many of my intentions would be fulfilled. However, it turned out that the rock on which we laid our matted wool was too rough, as sharp edges made holes in the felt.



We also matted new strips in a washing machine, and used the foot and rock matted felt as texture material in the installation. If the object was to make maximum functional felt using this felting method, we would have to matt the wool on a smoother rock, as shown in the previous chapter.

The mayor of Nesna provided a tractor with a bucket, the culture consultant Inkeri Laitinen and the university college teacher Pauliina Heiskanen helped me mount this sail-like element in the pole sculpture. Ropes were tarred before completion.

The structure was called the *Northway*. It “sailed” towards the north. The poles were made of slow grown spruce from Nesna. The sails had imprints of Nesna-rock and Nesna-feet, and were made according to local matting traditions! Some of the oldest Norwegian sails found are woven wool sails that were matted windproof by use!



Seen through local felt at Nesna harbour, the summer of 2008

In the future, I hope such an aesthetic approach to nature will increase the joy over being a part of natural surroundings which live and change with the seasons, and that this again will strengthen positive feelings towards one's home place, and encourage development of a local cultural identity.

The practical part of the project made me especially aware of the fact that we all need inspiration for our aesthetic choices. Not only nature and materials, but also art and culture influence our aesthetic choices. And these choices are to a great extent based on our visual perception of other's land art expressions.

From a questionnaire survey regarding land art in general teacher and pre-school teacher training in Norway

In 2003, I carried out a questionnaire survey regarding land art and aesthetic documentation in general teacher and pre-school teacher training among colleges at university colleges in Norway.

What about land art?

Among other things, I tried to map whether teachers worked with land art and aesthetic documentation in general teacher and pre-school teacher training. Work with land art in teacher training is a relatively new trend. Evidently, work with land art is more frequently exercised within small and medium study units, where we normally find pre-school training, and less often in larger units from 60 credits and upwards.

Most of the land art-work is carried out in the autumn, since it is important to make use of nice weather and beautiful colours and forms in the natural surroundings. Exams are still a long time away, and the pressure towards more traditional subjects is less prominent. Furthermore, it seems natural to start with new and fresh projects without long traditions, where teamwork unite new students in pleasant natural surroundings.

I work with both pre-school and general teacher training. However, it is in pre-school teacher training I have gathered my competence in nature art. From pre-school training teaching material has been introduced in general teacher training. Students have brought their experience with them to kindergartens, primary and lower secondary school and to extra-curricular schools teaching art and culture.

Obviously, it is vital that small children discover nature through spontaneous play and through the aesthetic challenges pre-school teachers adapt for.

In lower secondary school I have experienced that pupils skeptic to traditional creative activity in arts and crafts, have seen nature art as a fresh chance. They have taken new aesthetic challenges with a fresh and open mind, and expressed joy over mastering new creative tasks.

Why land art / nature art?

Many people wish to break barriers for what to any given time is defined as curriculum, in order to pave way for new ideas. They see an opportunity to tie a link to idea-based modes of expression in contemporary art, and help make students aware of local site-specific qualities.

Some answers:

It is important to become aware of a location's aesthetic qualities in form, line, colour, texture, materiality and room in nature, and that these possess aesthetic power in that they for instance can be highlighted and accentuated. Furthermore, patterns and formations can be made, e.g. by sorting materials.

Nature and its materials provide direct sensory experiences, sharpen perception and challenge the ability to construction and composition using available materials.

Nature gives us the possibility to work in large scale, and to discuss formalistic problems.

Making use of the contrast between an organic and a geometric style in nature provides new aesthetic challenges and possibilities.

It is important that children get excited about aesthetics in nature. By using it through play we can develop children's ability of aesthetic perception. This type of activity lies near children's play and creative expression.

Why aesthetic documentation?

Some answers:

Documentation is of vital importance as far as land art is concerned. All works of art and arts and crafts should be documented.

There are several possibilities for aesthetic expression through land art and web based documentation.

The process of taking of photographs does also represent an aesthetic challenge.

Documentation through a photo exhibition improves our ability of clarification, and leaves room for didactic reflection.

We improve our ability to see our surroundings and to choose aesthetic effects. Land art can be an awakening factor in that respect.

It is challenging to take good photos. Good as self-reflection and as inspiration for others, and it makes a process documentation possible.

By documenting, we can bring with us our work, use it further, reflect upon it, analyze, continue creating and not at least visualize parts of the subject matter and work methods for others.

Most of the artworks are ephemeral, so the moment must be preserved. Nature takes the artworks back!

The photos have their own aesthetic value. They can be beautiful. Documentation is important in order to preserve the student's different ways of expression.

The photos can inspire the viewer and can lead to similar activity in the student's future professional career.

In order to display artworks at a later point of time, they must be documented by use of photos/visualizations and text. This makes it possible to share one's experiences with fellow students.

Documentation also makes it possible to share experiences with others outside one's college. If the documentation is presented on the Internet, students at other colleges can make use of the experiences and artworks as inspiration for their own work. This strengthens learning and gives the work status. In this way, process and product can be documented and presented at exams.

How can art inspire?

Without guidance through study of land art and environmental art, we will soon end up in the world of clichés. The work made by active artists in the Western world in this area during the last generation is very interesting and inspiring.

I have selected three artist I think has lot to contribute with in arts and crafts in Norway. They create simple and beautiful artworks which people of all ages can be inspired by.

If someone choose to copy an artist' artwork in this context, we don't have to fear copy-right regulations. Attempts at copying can help young people understand the philosophy behind artworks. They learn how consistent and thorough such artworks are constructed. Furthermore, the artworks can stimulate young people to interact with landscape and elements at the chosen location. This ought to be the aim behind our activities. Additionally, I will recommend teachers to chose artworks that suit the environment and the degree of difficulty.

Below is a small selection which can evoke inspiration for kindergartens, primary and lower secondary schools and secondary schools.

Andy Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy has documented his work in beautiful photographs displayed in books like *Hand to Earth, Stone, Wood, Touching North* etc. The photographs in these books and the simple philosophy behind the artworks, where the aim is to make aesthetic works with no ambitions to create lasting monuments, are seen as familiar aesthetic challenges in teaching within the field of arts and crafts, to children, youth and students with various aesthetic backgrounds.

Goldsworthy says:

"The Artist/Naturalist's conscious connection to Earth sometimes begins in childhood as a kind of epiphany, but as often is a moment of recognition that a person comes to later. Both art-making and the natural Earth are central to an Artist/Naturalist. They are the complements of the yin yang that completes the whole.."

Andy Goldsworthy emphasizes his naivistic and authentic working method when he continues:

"I enjoy the freedom of just using my hands and "found" tools – a sharp stone, the quill of a feather, thorns".

He doesn't let seasons, weather conditions or lack of colours and traditional craft materials put a stop to his enthusiasm for art in nature:

"I take the opportunities each day offer. If it is snowing, I work with snow, at leaf-fall it will be with leaves; a blown-over tree becomes a source of twigs and branches. I stop at a place or pick up a material because I feel that there is something to be discovered. Here is where I can learn."

Furthermore, he stresses the importance of seeing and touching, and the significance of the location, its materials, forms, spaces and spaces in-between for his creative work in nature:

"Looking, touching, material, place and form are all inseparable from the resulting work. It is difficult to say where one stops and another begins. The energy and space around a material are as important as the energy and space within. The weather – rain, sun, snow, hail, mist, calm – is that external space made visible. When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it. It is not independent of its surroundings, and the way it sits tells how it came to be there."

The materials found on-site reveal life processes present before he starts his work and which continue after he has finished. They represent the cycles of nature and nature's pulsating vitality which he tries to capture in his artworks. In Wikipedia, we can read that the materials used in Goldsworthy's art often include brightly-coloured flowers, icicles, leaves, mud, pinecones, snow, stone, twigs, and thorns. He has been quoted saying:

"I think it's incredibly brave to be working with flowers and leaves and petals. But I have to: I can't edit the materials I work with. My remit is to work with nature as a whole."

He is aware of the danger such materials represent when it comes to a cliché view of what is considered beautiful art. But the materials exist and cannot be edited away! However, he claims that it is possible in this art form to get underneath the smooth surface of clichés and into the core of the life processes themselves:

"I want to get under the surface. When I work with a leaf, rock, stick, it is not just that material in itself, it is an opening into the processes of life within and around it. When I leave it, these processes continue."

"Movement, change, light, growth and decay are the lifeblood of nature, the energies that I try to tap through my work. I need the shock of touch, the resistance of place, materials and weather, the earth as my source. Nature is in a state of change and that change is the key to understanding. I want my art to be sensitive and alert to changes in material, season and weather. Each work grows, stays, decays. Process and decay are implicit. Transience in my work reflects what I find in nature."



Autumn colour scale sorted and laid around a hole in the ground. This is a typical Andy Goldsworthy land art-theme, which he has worked with in various natural environments and in various forms

Andy Goldsworthy continues:

"The underlying tension of a lot of my art is to try and look through the surface appearance of things. Inevitably, one way of getting beneath the surface is to introduce a hole, a window into what lies below."

By making a hole or a window in the artwork, he can show what is behind the surface or facade.

Photography plays a crucial role in Goldsworthy's artworks due to their often transient and ephemeral state:

"Each work grows, stays, decays – integral parts of a cycle which the photograph shows at its heights, marking the moment when the work is most alive. There is an intensity about a work at its peak that I hope is expressed in the image."

This statement supports Norwegian schools' and kindergarten's increased commitment to work with visual and aesthetic documentation in the shape of digital photography and video.

The knowledge we attain by seeing photos of artworks is of course inspiring, not at least due to the creativity and aesthetic quality we see in for instance Andy Goldsworthy's works. He uses materials present on the sites where he works and expose various processes which materials, forms and colours are affected by during changing seasons, weather and light conditions. He works for instance with flowers, leaves, grass, stones, sand, water, snow, ice, frost etc. He separates and sorts out colours, shapes and lines, gather and separate materials and colours, gathers for example red, green and yellow leaves in special shapes, makes use of colour contrast etc. He collects materials of similar shape, repeat them in a strict or free way in decorative and expressive patterns.

Goldsworthy draws attention to the spaces in-between, and present them as new forms with a value of their own which can be repeated regularly or irregularly, as rhythm in music or in non-figurative art. In this way, he addresses the same problems as modern designers, architects, pictorial artists, choreographers, composers and musicians.

The artworks are normally made of materials found on the site, and by use of simple joining techniques from known crafts. He sorts out materials, forms and colours, experiments with lines, forms and volumes. Known aesthetic variables are used with familiar natural materials. They are of sufficient permanence to be photographed. His artworks are mainly created outdoors, while photographs are used for exhibition material in art museums.

Goldsworthy distinguishes himself with his ecological perspective and his simple and aesthetic working methods. In broad outline, he relates to formal aesthetics and form variables in basic design theories, as they for instance are proposed by the designer and artist Lillian Garrett. His works are of relatively short-lived nature, and are especially well suited for photo documentation.

Andy Goldsworthy was born in Cheshire in England in 1956, and grew up in Yorkshire. He studied at Bradford College of Art (1974–75) and at Preston Polytechnic (1975–78).

Giuliano Mauri

I met Mauri at his home in Lodi in 2005, and he told me that his lattice artworks only has had importance for himself. During 10 years, he has had only around 20 visitors.

In the year 2000, a Swiss TV company made a programme with interviews and pictures of his artworks. We got to know that he returns and examines the status of his earlier structures, to record how the elements affect and change them. Some of the artworks were about to disintegrate completely, at the same time as they had changed structure and life at the sites they were erected. For instance, there had appeared cavities inside the lattice structures serving as homes for foxes and birds. The lattice construction had invigorated some plants and caused others to perish. In this view, Giuliano Mauri works can be placed in the intersection point between land art, environmental art and eco-art.



"All my installations are transient. The structures change, quickly become earth again and disappear," he states.

Mauri chooses to work with themes and materials which touch the senses. He photographs his works in order to preserve them, and says:

"The photographs enable me to keep the impressions. They are the only things I have left of the magic moments. I need to keep the photographs, because they let me affirm my memories. They become documentation which follow me."

To questions about the importance of sketches, he answers:

"I use sketches to 'note down' all the critical details I have to be aware of in the building project. In the sketches, I mark for instance wood type, use of nails or steel wire and fence pliers.

When I start working, I study my sketch. It contains all my notes, which give me the general view. But the idea itself is already developed before I start drawing. I don't invent anything, I only build."

"Since my artworks are not of any economic importance, they cannot attain any social importance," Mauri states, and continues: "They can never become objects to bring home or put in a museum. But my installations still continue to excite me, due to the fact that I have to strive for several months to complete them."

Giuliano Mauri often makes small-scale models of his sculptures. These can be sent to indoor exhibitions and to possible customers.

Above we see an example of such a sculpture. It is placed in his daughter's home on the outskirts of Lodi, where she intends to gather a collection of her father's small-scale works. A possible customer might be for instance an art museum or a municipality. Craftsmen then start building the structure large-scale while Giuliano Mauri sees to it that the work is carried out according to his plan.



In the park in front of the main entrance to the design centre La Triennale in Milan, there is a sphere-shaped lattice structure by Giuliano Mauri with a diameter of approximately 6 meters. The structure has double walls with a gap of approximately 60 cm with narrow paths which form spirals leading upwards in the sphere. There are openings where children can enter and walk on these paths – a thrilling experience!



La cattedrale vegetale

Giuliano Mauri

[Torna alla scheda](#)

[Torna all'indice percorso espositivo](#)

Foto Aldo Fedele, © Arte Sella.

*The environmental-art structure *La cattedrale vegetale* became the main attraction at the international Arte Natura-exhibition Arte Sella in Trento in 2001. The cathedral is 82 meters long, 15 meters wide and 12 meters tall. Like many of Mauri's artworks, it is built by craftsmen using hammer, nails and saw, on the basis of a small model made by the artist.*

Giuliano Mauri was born and bred in Lodi Vecchio near Milan in northern Italy in 1938. He is called 'the man who weaves with sticks'. Originally a landscape painter and pasta maker, he discovered lattice structures' aesthetic possibilities and challenges. He has for instance spent much time in a wetlands area outside Lodi, where he has expressed himself by using willow shoots in lattice techniques in thickets.

Nils-Udo

Nils-Udo creates his artworks in selected natural surrounding using materials and colours found on the site. He uses berries, leaves, sticks, the movement of water, the growth of plants etc.



Each artwork is an aesthetic response to the landscape and the materials he finds around him. The beauty of nature harmonizes with the landscape he gently alters in own poetic way. In this way he gives the work entrancement, mystique and sensitivity.

On the photo above right, we see that the human body covered with green leaves (perhaps by help of water or olive oil as a binder) together with a water surface and unspoilt nature has become a momentary aesthetic composition existing long enough for a camera to document it for posterity. The photograph brings us to the scene, and we can analyze and interpret the picture as any other piece of art from a more traditional genre.

He creates a seductive world of potential utopias in colourful compositions with giant nests, dreamy and poetic expressions in forest, water and air where nature itself is the prime source of inspiration.

Nils-Udo shows profound respect for nature and nature's beauty, and subordinates himself nature in everything he creates. This makes his philosophy and works clear didactic models for arts and crafts in kindergartens, schools and teacher training. His artworks are richly photo-documented in his books, see list of references.

Nils-Udo comes from Bavaria in Germany, and has been working directly with nature since 1972. He turned from painting nature to creating site-specific pieces using natural materials. His highly lyrical artworks have been exhibited in Europe as well as in Japan, Israel, India, Mexico and in the USA.

Timo Jokela

As an environmental artist, Timo Jokela mainly works with materials from the Northern Cap, like wood, stone, snow and ice, or with materials, forms and techniques from the local cultural heritage, like Sami cultures, cultures within agriculture, forestry, fishery, hunting etc.

Of works in wood materials I wish to mention some of his highly aesthetic and precisely constructed woodpiles, displaying a firm foundation in the distinctive character of local culture and in aesthetic thinking within environmental art.

Jokela has displayed his works in a great number of exhibitions and environmental art projects in different environments and communities in Finland and abroad. Both his artworks and his academic studies focus on the philosophical relationship between art and nature, between environmental art and local communities' art and culture. He is also responsible for several national, regional and international development projects (action research projects) within art education and art didactics.



His artworks in snow and ice in particular have earned him international acclaim. He explores the process of making moulds of snow and ice and sculpts the blocks using chainsaw or special chisels for snow and ice. The sculptural forms often communicate aesthetically with lines and shapes in the surroundings. They often have airy openings or peepholes between the spectators and the background, enabling the spectators to perceive the background in a new way. The sculptures can also refer to old or new local cultures' forms from everyday life, rituals, rites, writing symbols, just to mention a small selection of possibilities within Jokela's definitions of environmental art.

Timo Jokela works as professor of environmental art at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi in Northern Finland. Both in his own artworks and in his students' projects, he displays a close connection with local culture and nature in Northern Finland.

Aesthetic documentation in practice

Use of a camera

Always remember to obtain parents' consent to take photographs of their children. The parents must also be informed about the purpose of these pictures. Our kindergarten had a general acceptance from the parents for the child's entire period of time spent there.

Use the camera as you use your eyes to obtain information for a story you wish to pass on. Get an overall view of the scenario by means of the camera. If your camera does not have autofocus, make sure that you set the focusing distance to get a good picture quality. Then go ahead taking pictures.

Go close to the scenes by zooming or move nearer the subject. Make sure to include everything you think is important to convey.

Focus on the things that occupy the child. In some situations, for instance where the focus is on the handwork itself, it may be sufficient to show the child's hands in the picture. Try to vary the pictures by showing the motif from different angles. Maybe you will have to lie down on the ground or on the floor, or climb a tree to get a more exciting view. If we avoid photographic clichés, this can sharpen the spectator's interest.

Focus on the purpose and intention of the project. If this is teamwork, focus on children doing things together or trying to solve a problem together. If it is a physical activity, focus on the activity itself. In such a case it may be sufficient to see one child's foot. If the activity is painting, it can be appropriate to see both the hand moving the brush across the painting and the concentrated expression on the child's face. All relevant expressions and activities must be considered together.

In arts and crafts it is always tempting to focus on beautiful products. This is important, but it is equally important to show how and why they became beautiful. The toil on the way, and the less "beautiful" works are also a part of the story, and a subject of reflection around the project's purpose. This will contribute to make the story more true, and more exciting. In other words, it may be smart to take a lot of photographs, in order to have a substantial material to choose from when making the documentation.

Photographic documentation of children's creative work

In my didactic works I have largely concentrated on documentation by use of paper printouts and picture collages, with focus on students' and youngster's artworks in nature. Didactic nature art is a kind of aesthetic work that takes place in nature using nature's own materials. It is only to a small extent made to be displayed to others in the actual natural surroundings. The works need to be documented by means of picture media, to set a focus for the spectator and to increase the length of time of the experience.

In order to digitalize a traditional photograph, it must be sent to a PC by means of a very good photo scanner. Then it can be stored and modified, for instance in *Photoshop*.

If a digital camera is used, it may be an advantage to have a camera with high resolution (many pixels). If you for instance have a camera with 5 megapixels, you can cut away uninteresting parts and still have enough pixels to get a good copy quality. A good quality depends on how dense the picture points are positioned. The unit of measure for this is pixels (dots) per inch – dpi. A photographic quality of the printout requires 150 dpi as a minimum.

Equipment:

Most schools and kindergartens have access to basic IT-equipment with a digital camera. We also use a paper cutter, removable spray glue, paper and cardboard of different thickness with different textures and earth colours corresponding to the time of the year. I suggest brown for autumn pictures, moss green for forest pictures and bluish grey for winter pictures.

It is important for the exhibition that all groups use the same background colour. Black is an excellent background for all kinds of photographs. Black enhances colours and neutralizes the background. A combination of black and grey will often function well. It is very important to be aware of the fact that strong signal colours steal energy from the pictures.

Presentation of picture material

Our task will now be making a montage with a calming effect on the various modes of expression, while focusing on a didactical examination of the tasks and creating a new aesthetic order.

Make sure you have an adequate amount of picture material. Start with printing/copying the chosen photos on strong paper. You ought to have access to a small bench paper cutter and removable spray glue, so the picture can be moved after adhesion.

Make sure that all montages hanging in the same room have cardboard of identical type and colour.

- Black photo cardboard is recommended. It enhances the pictures, but can give a too heavy contrast. So a grey background should also be considered.
- Never use strong colours! It is the pictures that shall catch attention, not the cardboard. The montage is there to calm down and unify the pictures in groups that make sense, and to give the images new aesthetic possibilities.
- Never use zigzag-scissors! It gives the photos a character that steals the attention and degrades the aesthetics of the montage.
- Find out where the main lines in the montages should be.

Plato found that all surfaces and line segments had aesthetic dividing lines he called the *golden section*. These were lines that could divide surfaces and line segments both horizontally and vertically. Even though there are mathematical formulas for these proportions, we can roughly say that if the cardboard is divided into three equal lengths both horizontally and vertically, we get two lines one way and two lines the other. These lines lie near the golden section of the cardboard. Where two golden sections cross, we get *golden points*. On a cardboard as described above, we get four such golden points. The use of golden sections and points place our compositions within strong aesthetic traditions.

Furthermore, order is established if form elements stand or hang along the same line. If a form element is displaced up or down from the line, it is best if this is repeated in the montage. Thus we create rhythms like letters and words on a newspaper page, called layout in the technical terminology.

Use uniform line spacing. Let rows of pictures start at the same distance from the edge. Vary the picture size, space between and density. Estimate if the direction should be varied! Make sure that forms, colours and motives are repeated. Position a main motif in the golden section if you like. Make columns of text which correspond with picture formats, and use text

sparsely. Many people see the pictures, very few read the long texts! Therefore, let the pictures tell the story, and use removable spray glue!

In a few year's time we will all have possibilities to make such montages in for example Photoshop or similar programmes, and print them out in A2-formats to a price far lower than today. At the time being, this is the professional exhibitors' arena.

PC presentation

The computer is a handy tool. Many of the principles mentioned above can be used for a "montage" on the computer, for instance in Photoshop. The relationship between photos and text is essential. If the presentation is intended as basis for discussion among the staff, one should use pictures showing different aspects of the work, with limited use of text. If it is a presentation of the kindergarten's activities on the Internet, this requires an entirely different selection, and possibly more use of explanatory text. But the selection of pictures, their quality (both aesthetically and content-wise) must be carefully scrutinized to make sure that the pictures will communicate efficiently.



Winter with little snow. Enough to highlight bark cracks on pine trees. Form repeated with moss and ice. Use of golden section in the documentation. Student work, HiA 1994

The documentation may well be lively and open for many questions. Facts do not ask questions, and will not to the same extent contribute to wonder, curiosity and discussion like the uncertain, poetical and aesthetical will do. Those who visit our exhibitions, and read or hear

what we have to say, get something to talk about. In this way the documentation incites to new reflection and new culture.

A good exhibition should contain things that can activate the visitor physically, which can be achieved by inviting the visitors to participate physically.

Exhibition as a form of presentation

The montages described above all represent small exhibitions as soon as they are mounted on a blackboard or a wall to be shown to others. Generally one can say about such an exhibition that charts that belong together should be placed next to each other. If the different groups have used different cardboard colours, it is advisable to mount together those with the same cardboard background colour and same themes, to a board or a wall. This problem can best be avoided if the teacher chooses a cardboard colour that will match the colours in the photos and the time of year. Avoid the kindergarten and pre-school tradition of using signal red, blue and yellow cardboard! Such strong colours steal the energy from the pictures. Experience shows that blue-grey match winter motifs, earth colours autumn motifs, while grey and black are safe background colours for any season.

Avoid anything that can disturb the picture, such as use of zigzag-scissors and gluing pieces of sticks, shells, stones and grass to the cardboard! If structures, pictures and installations of natural materials is a part of the exhibition, these should be placed in a separate section!

Make sure that the cardboards that match colour-wise and theme-wise are mounted together. Use the same principles of common lines when mounting pictures on the cardboard background.

If the exhibition requires more text than what can be found on the wall-charts which go with the pictures, this text should be written with large letters on separate one-line posters. These can for example be placed between the charts or partly overlap them, and form a line running through the exhibition in precisely the same height from the floor.



From the exhibition at Agder Natural History Museum by museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen, of artworks made by 8th class pupils from Kristiansand in 2005

Presentation of a experimental development project in a kindergarten

I will now describe a development project concerning children's work with art in and with nature, and photo documentation of this project. The theme was derived from a development project which was a collaboration between the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Education at Agder University College and Soria Moria Kindergarten at Eydehavn in Arendal. The project was based on ideas from nature art and aesthetic documentation.

A group of eight four- and five-year-olds from Soria Moria Kindergarten participated. After a brief preliminary project we carried out a three-day long outdoor arts project. The end result was presented for the staff. Later, 15 students attending the arts and crafts programme (30 credits) in pre-school teacher training at Agder University College (HiA) in Grimstad participated in a new arts project.

Work practice organizing

Nature, nature art and pictorial art, children's play and creative activity and aesthetic educational documentation provided the setting for the student's work experience period.

The project started with a three-day long arts assignment where teachers in arts and crafts and education science from HiA participated together with project supervisors from Soria Moria Kindergarten. We all took photos of the process, chose the ones we wished to present, and made a PowerPoint-presentation of these for the staff in Soria Moria Kindergarten. This prompted discussion about how photos aided understanding the process and which presentation form is most suitable.

With these experiences in mind, we started working with the students. They completed their two-week long work practice period as a team. The students were encouraged to emphasize children's creative activity and documentation of such activity through photographs and text. Shortly after, the children could see an exhibition with text and photos of their own artworks on the college premises.

Work practice content

The students defined aesthetic goals regarding making the children more aware of form and colour. Through work with a painting they wished to investigate whether the children could be inspired to make their own artworks in nature using natural materials, forms and colours.



As their starting point, the students used a painting from their own art history classes: *Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh. They showed the children a picture of the painting, and talked about recognizable forms and colours. They did this for approximately 45 minutes.

The students wished to encourage the children's sensation of vivid visual impressions of yellow, blue and green, dominating colours in van Gogh's paintings. After pouring water into two glass jars, they poured blue tempera into one jar and yellow into the other. Into a third jar, they poured some drops from the blue solution and some drops from the yellow. What was the result? For the children this seemed like magic!

Then they painted a large *Starry Night*-picture as group work with rotation. The children gathered around a large sheet of wrapping paper taped to the table, each using their own brush with optional yellow or blue.

Erik: *It is hardly any green here!*
Celius: *It is quite easy to be an artist!*
Emmy: *Look ..! Princess-like waves!*



After about five minutes, they changed places, but not before it felt natural. This rotation continued for 90 minutes, until the painting was completed. In this way the painting became a collective effort. Everyone had to hand over some of their own work and take over work from others. Finally, they all had to evaluate the end result to see if something was lacking.



Michaela: *Look at the big star! It is the king star and that is the queen star!*

Celius: *Now I have learnt to paint the sky ... together with others. I haven't painted the sky before ... I thought about it ... but I didn't paint what I thought about!*

The following day, students, the pre-school teacher and children go to the beach to explore the materials, forms and colours found there.

Student: *Yesterday we painted Starry Night. Tomorrow, we can make Starry Night on the beach. What can we find here that we can use in the picture?*

Adrian: *Blue mussels are blue!*

Ann Heidi: *Are blue mussels alive?*

Erik: *Can I pick some grass, since it is green? There is nothing yellow here. Perhaps we can find yellow at home!!*

Next day, they went to the beach equipped with tempera, brushes, buckets and spades. "Let's see, which colours did van Gogh use in his painting?"

Collect things in buckets and sort them:
But we want to play!

Yes, we're playing the collecting game!

Large, small, smaller, teeny-weeny, blue, light blue, white, brown!

Where can we find blue and where can we find yellow? Children and adults looked for yellow and blue. They found dandelion, coltsfoot and blue mussels.

They experimented with materials in the sand. Eventually, they brought forth tempera and painted pebbles yellow and blue. The children's curiosity and creativity conjured up new techniques and ways of expression.

Light fine sand + tempera + water = sand painting!



Starry Night by children from Soria Moria Kindergarten was created in blue and yellow, by use of coltsfoot and blue mussels on a sheltered and cosy beach near Eydehavn.



Visual work practice report and feedback from children

We encouraged the students to document the project in an aesthetic and visual work practice report. They chose to continue the work by making an aesthetic montage with photos and neatly handwritten texts in black ink on wrapping paper of different fineness and texture. The photos should chiefly tell the story while texts should merely supplement.

The children were invited to see the exhibited montages one month later. They rushed towards the group projects, eager to find traces of their own work: *That's my princess wave! That's my flower! I mixed that blue colour! I painted that yellow stone!* etc.

The visual memories seemed to evoke feelings related to the individual and to the group, as well as providing new aesthetic experiences. The creative impulse here represented by *Starry Night* by van Gogh, was recalled in a new way. Perhaps we can say that the documentation contributed to strengthen the child's aesthetic comprehension?



Our students made colour printouts and cut them into rectangular shapes with a paper cutter. Simple texts related to the documentation of the children's artworks were neatly written in black ink on rectangular strips of wrapping paper. The pictures and text strips were mounted on rectangular strips of corrugated cardboard. Three such strips were then mounted next to each other on thick cardboard of similar sandy colour as the corrugated cardboard. The montage measured approximately 100 x 120 cm. Well suited for visual presentation, but for the time being very expensive to make with a printer.

8th class pupils at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden

In arts and crafts education in Norway, nature is the scene where pupils traditionally gain their basic sensory experiences, which again form the basis of perception and aesthetic expression. This is especially evident within the aesthetic subjects.

A teacher must know how we can open and sharpen the pupils' senses for the beauty of nature and the multitude of expressional possibilities in our interaction with nature. An interaction which can lead to an aesthetic or poetic way of exploring, experiencing, seeing and affecting

nature. The pupils' visual sensations, fantasy and aesthetic expressions should be stimulated throughout primary and lower secondary school.

The pupils need knowledge of and experience in observing and using lines, forms, colours, contrasts and materials in nature. These are educational objectives in arts and crafts. Right from the start of primary school, pupils are asked to collect, sense and handle natural materials, and to use their imagination in creative work with various materials and dimensions. Nature art contains all this.

Several subjects can be incorporated in nature art, for instance mathematics. The pupils can be assigned to sort pebbles according to form or colour in mosaic projects inspired by ancient floor mosaics. They get acquainted with form and space when building basic geometric forms. A sphere-shaped, pyramid-shaped or cube-shaped room of natural materials can be constructed using for instance stones, sand, snow, ice, branches and logs. Awareness of volume, form, colour and style is developed through work with nature art. The process and resulting artworks can be documented through photography and video.

Work with photography and documentation is central in lower secondary school in Norway. The educational programme in a written teacher guide made especially for this project, *Creating nature art*, aimed to fulfill several learning objectives – also interdisciplinary – stated in the Core Curriculum. *Creating nature art* was a collaboration project between the Institute of arts and crafts at Agder University College, Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, The Cultural Rucksack-programme and Kristiansand Municipality. The project was offered to all eight-class pupils in Kristiansand. It included nature art in theory and practice, haiku poetry and documentation through photography and text. Teachers attended an introductory course and were given the teacher guide with illustrations.

Didactic challenges were concretized in a long list of suggestions for projects in the park's different environments and in different weather conditions, in summer, autumn and winter, for pupils and teachers. This book's final chapter, "Suggestions for nature art assignments in different environments", contains a list of assignments. Some of these are listed below:

- Discover forms, colours and lines in nature. Highlight them and elucidate their aesthetic character.
- Make use of craft techniques like lashing or plaiting used in e.g. basketry traditions, using lattice materials found on-site, like willow, reed etc. in construction of sculptural forms.
- Experiment with contrasts in colour and form, e.g. frozen ice-forms against skin, flowers against stones or painted sticks against a green lawn.
- Sort materials, e.g. pebbles, according to form and colour. Lay a picture on the ground using these materials as a palette.
- On basis of lines, forms and colours at the location, use an artwork from Cubism or abstract art as inspiration to make a picture in nature where sorted natural materials constitute the palette.

Museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen made sure that teachers and pupils from the 17 different schools chose different approaches for their work. Their assignments were among those listed in this book's final chapter. She also asked the schools to prepare the pupils as

regards lashing, weaving and plaiting techniques, collection of materials for use in the projects etc.

Haiku poetry course

The teacher guide included a brief introduction to the haiku poetry tradition by freelance writer Ruth Marion Sørenstuen. Haiku poetry emerged in order to describe ambiences, observations and conditions in nature, and is well suited as a means of poetic expression in this context.

Haiku is a form of poetry where each poem contains three metrical units of five, seven and five syllables. Eventually, there has emerged new forms with other rules, but all haiku poems are short and concise, often with a third line presenting some element of surprise.

Haiku often deals with seasons of the year. A season can be mentioned by name, or an animal or a plant can indicate a specific season. Nature in all forms are generally the motif for haiku poems. Matsuo Basho was a famous haiku poet, and one of his most famous poems goes:

*An old pond!
A frog jumps in:
The sound of water.*

And another by the same poet:

*For you fleas too,
The night must be long,
it must be lonely.*

Two poems by Takarai Kikaku:

*There goes a beggar
naked except for his robes
of heaven and earth.*

*In the river breeze:
The willow trees huddle,
spring comes into sight.*

In this nature art project, the participants were asked to write haiku poems based on experiences and impressions from making pieces of art. Some of the pupils' haiku poems can be studied in the chapter "Land art and haiku poetry".

Organization, inspiration and instruction

The teachers received a teacher guide with introductions to nature art, haiku poetry and with concrete ideas connected to the different natural environments at Agder Natural History Museum. The assignments were intended to be of guidance for teachers and pupils. In

addition to the assignments, the pupil groups were asked to choose their own natural material/colour/form, and incorporate this into the whole which was on the basis of the defined assignment. All artworks had to be photo-documented.

I had put to their disposal a cassette with slides presenting some works of land art by the artists Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo. Most of the other slides showed how my students have worked with nature art in various contexts and in different seasons, on the basis of environments and assignments I had presented them. Some slides also contained good examples of documentation and presentation of nature art projects through placards with emphasis on visual design.

Museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden was the project supervisor. The museum gives this brief account of the project:

“When each 8th class came to the museum to work with nature art a whole day, the day started with a brief introduction indoors, where Beate showed slides of Sørenstuen’s nature art projects.”

We chose pictures of nature art which the 8th class pupils easily could relate to. Beate reports:

“In the teacher guide, the teachers were advised to bring along berries, rose hips, shells, pebbles etc. to use in the nature art assignments. They had been informed about which materials would be available and not available within the museum area. So several classes came well prepared and had collected various natural materials. All classes had been allocated a theme in advance (see the list of themes in this book’s final chapter). Our hope was that the teachers had prepared their classes well by discussing how their theme could be depicted in nature art.



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Møvig School, Kristiansand 2005

Examples of themes: spirals, quadrangles, circles, triangles, mosaics, filling of empty spaces. ... Initially, there seemed to be some lack of imagination among the pupils. When the theme was "circles", they made a circular shape, but I had hoped that the teacher had encouraged them to employ their imagination by sketching in order to find several ways of depicting one or a number of circular forms. So one of my tasks became to come up with suggestions of how they could elaborate on the theme. Some pupils then started with an entirely new approach, while others were so engrossed with the image they had in mind that they only wished to make what they originally had intended."

Beate continues:

"Furthermore, I instructed the pupils to reduce the number of materials and colours, as they often included all kinds of natural materials in the same artwork. I became quite strict on this, actually! Most of them saw themselves that the quality of their work of nature art improved when they focused on fewer materials and accentuated lines by laying a double or triple layer of flowers or berries instead of thin, vague lines."

The pupils had the whole school day at their disposal to make nature art, but they had often finished within one and a half hours when creating artworks on the ground. They were not always good at making use of the fact that they had plenty of time. But there were exceptions; some groups made intricate artworks and kept working for hours, and found it difficult to finish in time. Some were so enthusiastic that they started on new artworks, one after the other!

Furthermore, it was my job to run around photographing and filming the pupils in action and the completed artworks. This was actually a full-time job in itself, because the pupils worked so quickly, and several groups finished almost simultaneously and in relatively short time. So in order to document the process in all groups, it was important that they didn't work too far apart, so that I could pay several visits to each group before they had finished (often in one and a half hours).

We allocated time for lunch and half an hour at the end of the day to gather the class and walk from artwork to artwork, giving constructive comments and praise. Sometimes the teachers held the summing-up and sometimes I did. The pupils were very interested in marks, they were keen to know what mark I gave every piece of art! However, award of marks was the teacher's responsibility. But since this evidently seemed like a key motivational factor for the pupils, it might be considered next time. Then I would have discussed with the teacher in advance, so we could agree upon how to award marks, who should make notes, which criteria we should set etc. Which significance the teacher eventually attach to this mark, I don't know, as this neither is my responsibility".

And the pupils went ahead working with land art



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Møvig School, Kristiansand 2005



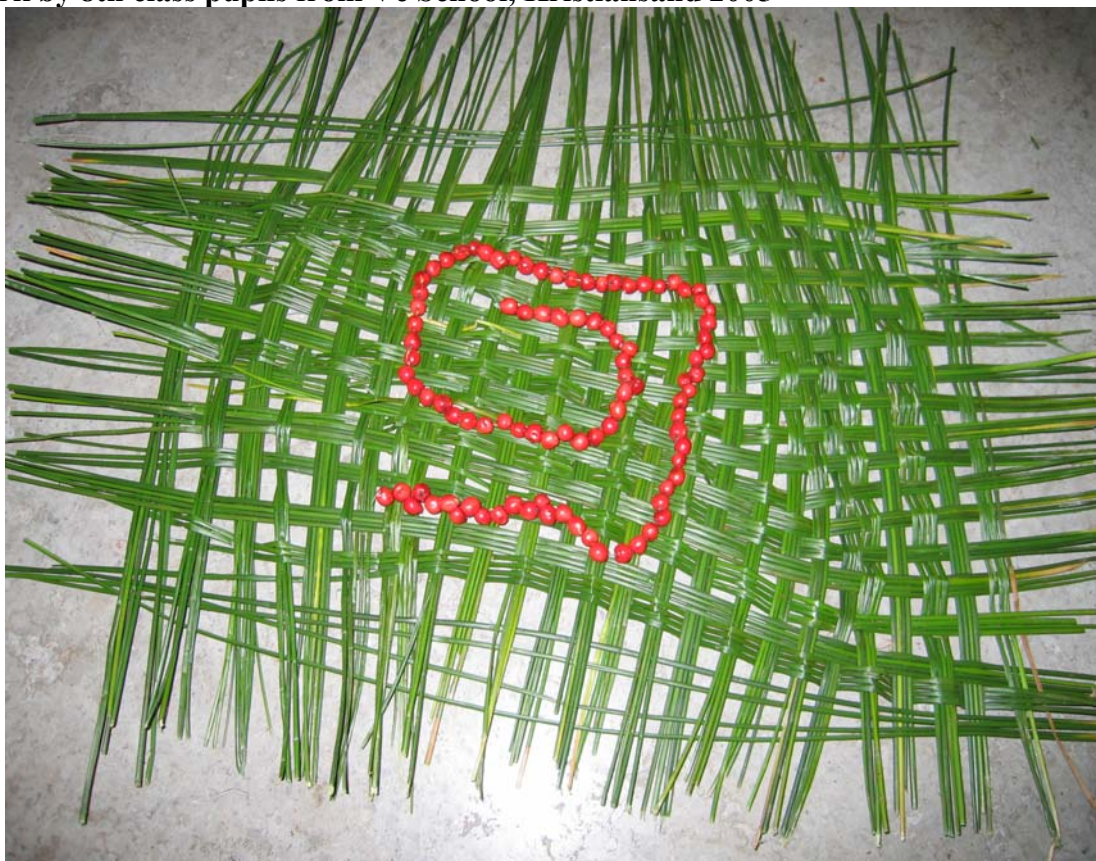
Artwork by 8th class pupils from Mosby School, Kristiansand 2005



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Fiskå School, Kristiansand 2005



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Ve School, Kristiansand 2005



Artwork by 8th class pupils from Holte School, Kristiansand 2005

The site's distinctive character and possibilities were significant for the choice of artistic expression. The artworks were to be photographed for posterity. We experiment in making aesthetic documentation of processes and products. This would initially be presented as placards at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, and supplemented with new artworks when completed.

Later, the photo documentation was included in a Christmas exhibition at the museum. I tried to choose pictures which showed diversity or an interesting working process. We followed lines, forms and spaces in-between in nature in company with 8th class pupils from Kristiansand. The photographs from this project were taken by museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, Kristiansand in 2005.

We made use of geometrical archetypes, such as quadrangles, triangles, circles, cubes, pyramids, cones and spheres. Related to both art and science, they can be exiting contrasts to the more organic forms in nature.

..... and haiku poems

"Leaves on a green bed"

*The rainbow enters the leaf
Spreads its colours
What more can you wish?*

"Forest in bloom"

*Small, yellow suns
lighten our forest
whirling around and around*

"Autumn colours"

*Autumn colours whirl around
while two small elves
are doing the circle dance*

"Feathery landscape"

*Nature invites to
a feast of colours
The wind blows in the autumn*

"Sundial"

*Times colours
our lives
Nature leaves its mark*

"Halo of autumn"

*The halo of autumn
in a gentle breeze
yellow leaves in a circle*

*Heavenly work
Leaves forming
the halo of autumn*

*One leaf is falling
All leaves are falling
No one left*

*Hanging there
amid many trees
Can you see what it is?*

"Triangle"

*Our triangle tall and staunch
a mushroom in the middle
Stones are all around*

*Triangle upon triangle
in colours of the sun
How many can you find?*

"Hearts in space"

*Extreme transformation
from grey to red
beneath dark trees they glow!*

"Circle upon circle"

*Circle upon circle
in lots of vivid colours
amid the autumn trees*

”Birds at the waterfall”

*Three birds on a cliff
with feathers fluttering
making us colourful*

”Call down peace”

*All birds great and small
fly amid the forest trees
their bodies so shiny*

”The butterfly”

*The butterfly pink and green
nature’s queen
What if it flies away?*

“Rose hip”

*Circle, circle,
flower petal
Rose hip so nice and rund*

”Whirling stars”

*The stars are whirling
around and around
to shimmer on you and me*

“Lucky troll”

*A lucky troll, a ladybird
red, yellow and black
with antennas and wings*

”The butterfly”

*What a sweet little
colourful fellow
we three have made*

Rose petals, berry shrubs

*becomes art
in human hand*

"Intoxication"

*We felt the scent of roses
and then it was done;
We were intoxicated*

"A blooming earth"

*A blooming earth
housing all living things
The world is grand*

The instructor's summery

The pupils were informed of possible restrictions, what tools they could use, in which part of the museum park area they could stay and which plants they could and could not cut down. The first couple of days there were incidents where pupils cut down rare plants in the beds. Also, it was almost impossible to document all groups' working process and end results when they were scattered across the whole museum park. Therefore, we made sure the whole class worked in the same area.

We also learned that giving the pupils free access to tools and materials was unwise, since they helped themselves uninhibitedly, regardless of whether they would make use of them or not. Knives, rakes and branch cutters were sometimes used as fighting tools (especially among the boys!), and there were some damage to trees and bushes. Furthermore, the pupils threw tools on the ground without returning it, so that kindergartens and people using the museum park often found sharp knives etc on the ground. The classes who made three-dimensional structures in trees needed knives and branch cutters, but apart from these, we eventually discovered that the work went smoother if the pupils were not given any tools.

The classes who constructed three-dimensional structures in branches, had to use all their allocated time, as it was very time-consuming. From this I learned that the pupils should have had lashing training before starting, in order to make the lashings around branches firm, durable and aesthetic. They didn't receive this training, but I shall not organize new projects where lashing skills is required without giving the pupils a brief practical introduction to joining techniques. One cannot always assume that the teachers master these skills themselves.

Exhibition

Project supervisor and museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden photo-documented the work in progress and the completed artworks. The pictures with short texts mounted on cardboard became montages for exhibition

purposes. Placards and some of the artworks were displayed in the museum exhibition area. The participants, fellow pupils, parents and other spectators invaded the museum in order to see these beautiful pieces of art. They also gained acclaim in newspapers and tv-programmes.



From the exhibition of land art at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden by museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen. Artworks made by 8th class pupils from Kristiansand in 2005



From the exhibition of land art at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden by museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen. Artworks made by 8th class pupils from Kristiansand in 2005



From the exhibition of land art at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden by museum teacher Beate Strøm Johansen. Artwork by 8th class pupils from Kristiansand, 2005

Land art in Nesna

Warming up the senses in the seashore

Possible environments:

Sandy beach, pebble beach, large rock surfaces, two iron manhole covers, tufts of grass, spaces between tufts and stones, shoreline.

Possible materials:

Sand and pebbles of different colours and sizes, large round stones, triangular stones, quadrangular stones. Shells, fish heads, iron nails, burnt wood, dandelions, stems, leaves etc.

Possible assignments:

- 1) Study the beach and find out which forms and lines are already present. Highlight these forms and lines by use of a new material.
- 2) Sort sand and pebbles and use it as if you paint a self-portrait in the sand or on a flat stone.
- 3) Use a bucket and a spade and build the mountains you see in the distance: Hughtinden, Breidtinden, Breidtomma, Tomskjevelen, Handnesfjellet.
- 4) Chose one of large stones and put smaller stones in dumps and cracks..
- 5) Stack stones on top of each other. How do you make a tall stack?
- 6) Fill the gaps between large stones with fish skulls.
- 7) Clear a piece of the beach with a rake and lay down straws in a fan-shape.
- 8) Lay burnt wood in a fan-shape with the burnt edges facing each other in the centre.
- 9) Find a large stone and put dandelion flowers in the indentions and dandelion leaves where the form bulges.
- 10) Study the rock slope and put dandelion flowers in all indentations and crevices.
- 11) Take sorted beach materials and lay different materials in each square in the manhole cover.

All artworks were photographed, during the process and when completed. After completion, the groups studied each other's artworks and learnt about the process step by step.

When we arrived at the beach, it bore traces of waves in the sand, which the ocean waves had left during the night. Through conversation and questions, this was something the children found out themselves. We also discussed the appearance of the mountains in the

The mountains in the distance

Then the children were given concrete assignments. One group was asked to dig the dark troughs in the sand waves deeper. The sand that was dug out was laid further up on the beach where a new grouped shaped sand mountains inspired by the mountains in the distance.



Waves on the beach ...

Children and adults participated, and the instructor accentuated the waves by raking in the sand. This work went on for one hour, and a lunch break was a welcome treat.

After the break, the participants were asked to sort materials they found on the beach and use them to fill the troughs of sand waves. All participants then looked for white pebbles and lay these in one wave, and black pebbles in the next wave.

In the next kindergarten group some children had picked dandelions on the way. The project supervisor showed them how the flowers could be pinched off and laid in the gaps between stones as if painting with a colour. They got the point, and all went ahead picking more flowers.

They were now free to collect different materials and place them in the gaps between other stones. This became a mosaic with crab shells in one group, blue mussels in a second group, snail shells in a third etc.

Workshop for scouts and 4-H in Bjørndalen

It was a family gathering in beautiful and magical Bjørndalen. The school band were playing while scouts and 4-H members lashed poles together into a long fence-looking structure. Even though the project supervisor had shown pictures of similar structures placed in water, it was difficult to visualize the end result. Great was the surprise and joy when the fence was lifted up in a vertical position. Now everyone realized what this could become!



The structure was formed into a circle and lashed in the joints. After a couple of attempts of carrying the structure into the water we found out that the ends had to be sharpened in order to be pressed down in the sea bottom, and that the structure had to be fortified. The water in Bjørndalen was also deeper than presumed, so some of the adults fetched their waders and assisted with the placing.



Waders proved necessary!



A crown on the water – just for the sake of beauty!

Finally, the expected result was achieved when the structure stood like a netpen mirrored in the water.

A course for general teachers and pre-school teachers in Nordland County

The course participants received a theoretical introduction to land art and were shown a variety of relevant works of land art made by artists or previous students. They could pick colour photos they found inspirational for the following day's work or for later land art work with children. We finished the day with dandelion work (see below).

On the day for practical work the participants also had the opportunity to pick a photo as inspiration for their own work. These were discussed in plenary. Moreover, they were shown the artworks made by 4-H and scouts two days earlier. Each group could choose a natural habitat and discuss possible aesthetic approaches. Eventually, we had several artworks displayed in Bjørndalen when the pupils from Nesna School attended their land art course the following day.

Theory and workshop

Theory course in land art for around 30 general teachers and pre-school teachers from Helgeland in Mid-Norway. Introduction to land art, aesthetic and didactic principles based on works by land art-artists as Andy Goldsworthy, Giuliano Mauri and Nils-Udo. Presentation of slides from different land art projects involving students in teacher training and from the decoration of the snow and ice hotel in Lainio Snow Village in Finnish Lapland, with emphasis on works of environmental art in snow and ice by professor Timo Jokela.

The course day ended with a joint land art project on a rock slope in the camping area near the harbour. The assignment was to regard the rock slope as a painting and fill cracks, indentations and cavities with dandelion flowers (without stems).

With 30 participants and an abundance of dandelions in the vicinity, lines, points and surfaces soon were connected in linear interplay. It became evident how cracks and indentations on such a rock surface partly go in the same direction, created by inner geological phenomena as volcanic activity and by outer forces such as glaciers, wind and water. The summing-up and evaluation gave evidence of positive experiences both regarding working methods and aesthetics. The viewing of slides in the morning had a securing effect on the participants. It inspired them to make use their own aesthetic skills in harmony with nature, and to see the possibilities in the linear interplay on the rock slope in front of them.



Cracks and indentations were decorated!



The dandelion images often resembled strange looking people and animals ...

The teachers' artworks inspired the children



Firstly, I must plait them nicely ...



The gaps between a group of stones are filled with a new colour and a new material. Some grasped the task at once and went ahead, while others were more hesitant, and looked at the children at work until they soon grew equally excited!



This deep crevice must be decorated!

The crevice in this rock was filled with dandelion stems. Then it was *painted* yellow with dandelion flowers.



... and beautiful it became!



Asked to place similar shells next to each other, the child lay a beautiful mosaic



Mosaic art or material collage?



Great excitement even for the smallest snail shell

Finally, the participants were divided into six groups before the next day's practical work.

And the teachers continued ...

The groups were now asked to choose a photo of a work of land art by Andy Goldsworthy, Nils-Udo or from previous student projects.

The participants started by making artworks quite similar to one of the artworks from the photos the course instructor had shown of land art by Andy Goldsworthy, Nils-Udo or of particularly interesting student projects. Afterwards, on the basis of their own experience, the participants were asked to plan a more extensive project. The course instructor was prepared to offer suggestions (in case of possible starting problems), for instance sorting/stacking of stones, stacking of wood in rock crevices and underneath stone slabs, lashing of sticks for installations on land or in water or matting of red wool on stones and placing these stones in various environments. Everything with photographing, documentation and exhibition in mind.

They worked for almost two hours with the initial assignments, and for exactly two hours with the next. Half an hour was allocated after each work session for initiatives, summing-up and evaluation.

It seemed as if the creative energy peaked during the first part of the work. Maybe it was a good initiator to ask the groups to choose a picture? Maybe the participants had most creative energy in the beginning?

Assignment number two had no connection with photos. Perhaps they now had too much liberty? First, the course instructor gave an orientation about the possibilities of matting in land art. This was perhaps the reason why some of the groups chose this. The matting process took relatively long time, reducing energy and creativity regarding placement in different environments for photographing.

The course instructor showed how objects changed character when placed in different environments, and how images change character due to such experimenting. This seemed to have positive effects on the groups.



They made roman arches ...



And decorated caves with wood, moss, leaves and stones. Variation of lines, forms, texture, repetition of lines, spaces etc.



Rock crevices filled with wood anemones, and falling flowers parallel with falling water



The forest was decorated into a symphony of lanterns of sallow and wood anemones!



Four hands plaiting together!



The matted boulders were laid in different places



A red matted boulder in its home cave?



A room of woven sticks among live ones ... housing a red matted boulder



Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother's house, with a hood and a bridge

Upper primary school pupils inspired by the teachers ...

We started by studying the teachers' artworks from the day before. The pupils answered questions about the relation between the artworks and the natural environment, about the difference between art and function, definitions of art etc. This proved decisive for the children's choice of project and gave them impulses to initiate the group work. And their teachers became aesthetic or artistic models who could inspire to the pupils choices.

This group was divided into two groups, 40 pupils before lunch and 40 new pupils after lunch. Each of these groups were divided into three groups of 12–13 pupils. I then divided these into three smaller groups. Apart from myself as course instructor there was approximately one adult per group.

We started by studying works of land art from the scouts/4-H-workshop and from the teacher workshop. The artworks shown were:

Crown in water, stone bridges across pond, green cave in rock, lanterns, waterfall, lavvo of sticks, Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother house (with bridge), roman arch under bridge.

These projects served as an introduction to land art for the pupils. We talked about the difference between functional form and art, and, in this context, land art. For instance that lavvo-like lattice installations do not require watertight roofs, in contrast to a lean-to or a lavvo to sleep in.

At the waterfall-artwork, we talked about horizontal and vertical lines, at the lavvo of sticks about slanting lines and weaving of sticks, at grandmother's house about the fact that in such artworks a thatched roof is not necessary, and at the roman arch about the importance of a solid supporting wall (or a mound) on each side of the arch, and about the key role of the wedgestone.

Then they went ahead making stone bridges across the brook, one ladder up to the cave and another ladder down, and stone stairways at the climbing wall.



A scree taller ...!



How did they make it stand ...?



Three proud bridge engineers



Look how nice my rock has become!



Inspired by the teachers's artworks, and with help of a dad ... and he was pleased to help!



An abandoned bird's egg in a new place ...

The assignments were based on experience from the day before:

- Building of cairn of stone at the beach (measuring 30 cm x 30 cm x 60 cm).
- Building of cairn of wood at the beach (same measurements) placed on top of the stone cairns.

We started with a brief conversation about cairns and their cultural-historical significance. Aware of the fact that cairns are means to send signals, we wished to use our cairns to send out a signal that the Nesna Cultural Festival had started. The pupils were then given a brief demonstration of cairn building in stone and wood.

The pupils built six elegant square shaped 1 m tall cairns of flat natural stones from the seashore with smaller stones inserted in the gaps to stabilize the structures.

The groups arriving after lunch continued building cairns of wood on top of the cairns of stone, with equal measurements. Three logs were laid beside each other, then three new logs were laid on top of these crosswise. In this way the groups continued until the wood sack each group had at their disposal was empty.

The cairns were relatively steady. And in the nice weather we were blessed with the logs became nice and dry before lighting of the cairns on Friday 30th May 11.30 p.m. Just in case, I had inserted fire-briquettes and poured lighting fluid over the wood.

In addition to the assignments and on their own initiative, the children collected materials and made environments and material artworks between the rocks on the seashore.



1st class pupils and exchange students from Madrid build a cairn together



And the cairns brought forebodings of a festival in Nesna! (Photo: Anne Karin Klausen)

I had the opportunity to inform primary school pupils about these projects. Furthermore, it was my task to light the cairns while the pupils stood in a row along the road, parallel with the cairns and the sea. Six cairns were lit, signaling that the Nesna Cultural Festival had started!

This might be the start of a lifelong project involving commitment to nature, the environment and aesthetics in the local surroundings. Hopefully, this kind of work combined with documentation can boost young people's pride in their local nature and cultural traditions. The pupils also commented that collaboration was crucial in this kind of work, and that it had been fun working together.

Nests and strange rooms in general teacher training

This was a project involving general teacher students attending a 60-credits course in arts and crafts in 2001. We chose to work in the park at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad. In the park, there is a man-made pond encircled by rich vegetation. After studying pictures of land art, we knew that artworks in water became especially beautiful on photographs. Particularly beautiful was an artwork by Andy Goldsworthy where he had lashed thin debarked birch branches into shapes resembling bugs and created a fish trap-like form inserted into the bed of a small forest lake. Most of the structure was above the surface, reflected in the clear water. It expressed beauty in total harmony with the surroundings.

Assistant Professor Arild Andresen and I wanted to use old traditional crafts in new contexts. We let the students become acquainted with basketry traditions by showing them videos, old objects and by demonstrating techniques. We wished to promote their creative skills by letting them use shoots from wild-grown willow trees, reeds, leaves etc. from the park and incorporate this into basketry traditions. They also employed lashing yarn of natural materials and different lashing techniques, for construction purposes and for the sake of aesthetics. But mainly, the materials were plaited, woven or intertwined. Their tools were branch cutters in different sizes and their own fingers. In one project a battery drill was used in the construction process.

Construction



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



● På, under, over, i og ved tjernet.



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002

***Nests and strange rooms* in and around the pond**



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002



Student project at HiA, Dømmesmoen 2002

Environmental art in latticework

Introduction

Dømmesmoen was previously a school of horticulture offering courses in the green sector at university college level. A large part of the area around and between the buildings have been made into a park. The area outside the park has either been cultivated into orchards, cornfields or into areas for growing for instance willow and birch trees or areas for productive forest. The aim is to make an arboretum at Dømmesmoen. The place is ideal for work with nature art in arts and crafts courses in teacher training.

Challenges provided by nature and culture

Dømmesmoen is situated on parts of a terminal moraine consisting of sand and cobble stones from the last ice age, between the Skagerrak sea and the lake Rorevannet north of Grimstad in Aust-Agder County. The moraine was originally a forest-clad area rich in game and berries, while Rorevannet contained salmon and trout. The Skagerrak offered an abundance of sea delicacies. Between the moraine and the Skagerrak there is a former seabed of fertile soil ideal for growing grain and fruit. There is reason to believe that stone age people regarded Dømmesmoen as a fertile area ideal for settlement.

Due to its debris materials the moraine has served as burial site and as a place for various cult ceremonies. The fact that Fjære Church, one of Norway's oldest churches, is situated nearby, on the same moraine and between burial mounds, indicates that the area had temples of worship also in pre-Christian times. After the introduction of Christianity, a fountain near Fjære Church was named *Olavskilden* – the St. Olav Fountain.

Dømmesmoen has also served as a court of law and probably also as site for a governing assembly of local big farmers. The farm Bringsverd gård near Fjære Church served as a king's estate in the Middle Ages. Bringsverd was also a royal name in the Orkney Islands in the early Middle Ages.

Cultural monuments in the shape of burial mounds from the Bronze Age, cremation graves in the shape of small mounds and stone settings from early and late Iron Age have left their mark in the area, and the fertile former seabed soil has provided conditions for farming and horticulture. Pine and spruce forests still dominate the moraine ridge, while areas surrounding the cultivated land are dominated by thickets of willow, birch, ash, maple and rowan, to mention the most common found trees.

In primary and lower secondary education in Norway, subject integration is important, especially within new and untried fields. In arts and crafts nature shall be an arena for creative activity. Architecture is a relatively new part of the subject. What could be more natural than to think architecture on the basis of local character and local materials? By use of basic techniques in creating spatial forms. Techniques which may have been used in Nordic early Iron Age, and which reflect fundamental construction techniques and building traditions from e.g.

Norway's Sami culture or from remote places, for instance different African cultures. Today this can be considered as a hybrid of room art, land art and site analysis.

I chose to work with thicket materials and latticework techniques, as in basketry. The works were inspired by the land art-tradition, as represented by the Italian artist Giuliano Mauri and the British artist Andy Goldsworthy.

Dømmesmoen still has the *sacral* atmosphere so important to maintain in a construction project which aims to inspire to children's play and to feed their imagination.

A lattice village emerges

Choice of site

As site for the lattice village I chose an area situated between a lawn, a forest and some burial mounds, with stone settings from the Iron Age in the background. The burial mounds and the large trees provided an aesthetic frame around the tall rounded towers of plaited branches. The Iron Age stones would give them an exciting cultural-historical and architectonic reference.

In order to have some peace and quiet to experiment during the initial phase, I chose to build the first tower in the outskirts of Dømmesmoen. Later, the tower was moved to the chosen site by help of a crew and a tractor.

It is important to be aware of the fact that it not permitted to place such an installation sticking 20–30 cm into the ground closer than four meters from an ancient monument. Nevertheless, it is wise to contact the local authorities to obtain permission.

Choice of materials

I could forget using willow, which obviously would have been the simplest and prettiest, with the possibility of even thickness and shoots of even length. In Norway, there is not much willow, but a lot of sallow, rowan and ash of different thickness, length and straightness. This could be a reasonable limitation, possible to adapt to the inspiration from Giuliano Mauri.

During the building process, I realized that I in the tower structure ought to add a new material somewhat related with the lattice material and with ethnic architecture, but also representing a certain contrast to the material in the main structure. I considered different natural materials as well as synthetic materials. I ended up choosing birchbark. This is a water-resistant material which has been used in roofs both in Sami turf huts and in cog jointed houses with turfed roofs. This material is light and should fit for fragile and light roof structures. If birchbark was used in this way during the Bronze Age, without turf on top, it must have been for summer houses, outhouses, sheep cotes etc.

Choice of form

The forms I chose to work with, was inspired by the Italian land artist Giuliano Mauri's playful lattice architecture from Lodi outside Milan in northern Italy. Lattice evokes associations to early Iron Age, various ethnic cultures and to basic aesthetic work in nature, today also called *environmental art*, a branch of an art tradition evolved from the 1960s, which in art history has been labeled land art.

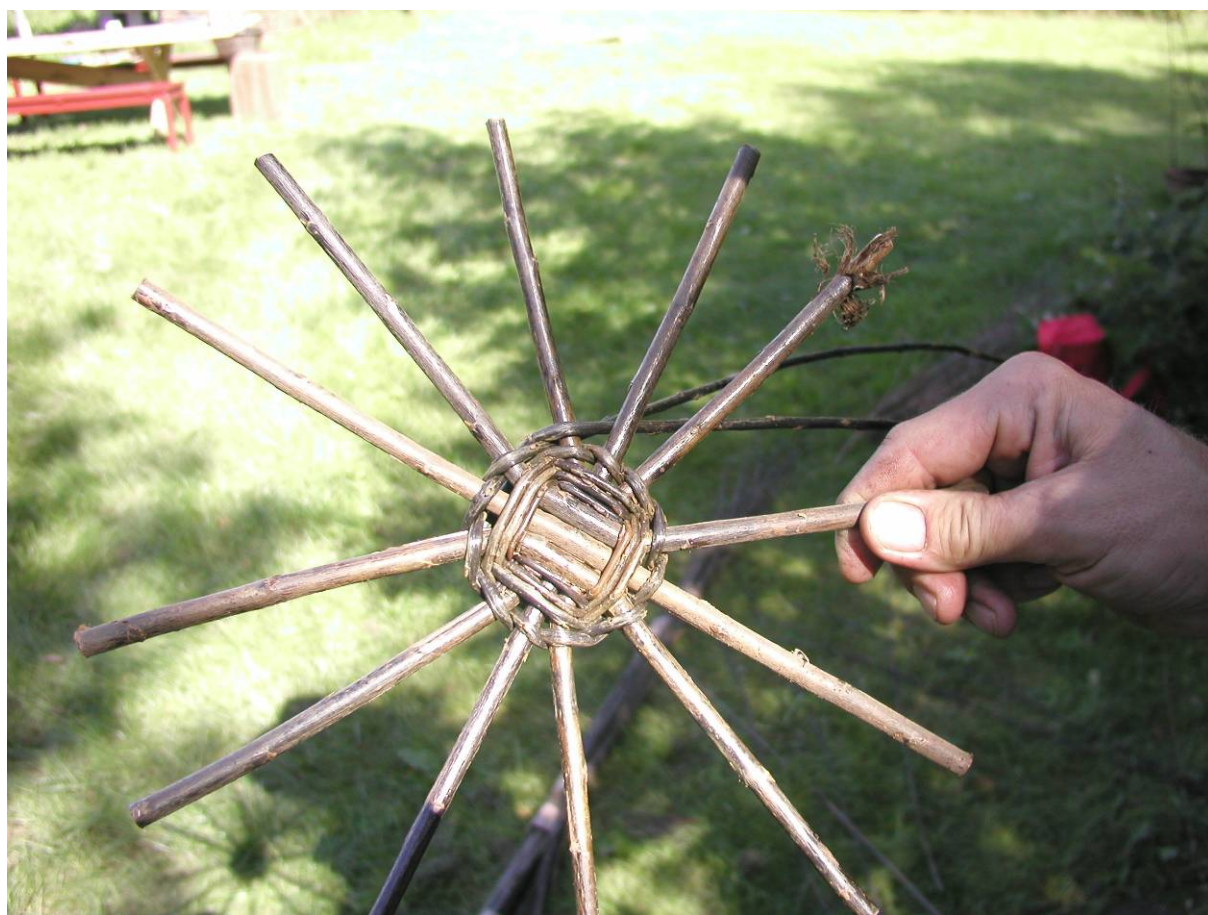
Material collection

Norway has a lot of thicket consisting of different tree species, depending on latitude and climatic conditions. These thickets are easily accessible. The trees are too thin for material and firewood production. Thickets shade from and steal nutrients from more productive crops. Therefore, it is normally easy to obtain permission from the landowner to harvest in such forests. But anyhow, it is important to ask the landowner! I obtained such permission from the caretaker at Dømmesmoen.

The vertical warps giving the structures shape and size were stuck into the ground. These must be solid in the root end, and long. Normally, pliability is not a must as far as these poles are concerned. So basically, any tree species will do. Sallow is always safe, if one has easy access to it.

Birchbark can be collected in spring. However, I have no experience with this. But the tree is not damaged if only the outer layer of bark is peeled! Norway imports birchbark in large quantities from Russia and Eastern Europe. Telemark Wood Company and Tradisjonsbygg in Morgedal are two main suppliers of birchbark in Norway.

Construction and techniques



From my own work, 2004

For the large tower, I planted eleven approximately 5 m long poles 20–30 into the ground (using a lever!), approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ m apart in a circle with a diameter of 2 m. These should

function as warps in a loom. In order to *weave* with the weft threaded *over-under-over-under* or *two in front and one behind*, two basic traditional techniques in basketry, an odd number of warps was necessary.

The weft materials should in principle be thinner than the warp material! I plaited two rounds and pressed the wefts downwards. Where the thin end of the weft ended, I let the thin end of the next begin approximately ½ m behind the last, so that the ends overlapped each other. Where the thick end of the weft ended, I started with the thick end of the next weft, with equal overlapping. The warps were approx. 5 cm in diameter at the root and approx. 5 m tall.

As weft material I will recommend willow, ash, rowan etc. in finger-thickness, and as long as possible. The thickness will decide whether the weft is to be used far down or high up. The further up you work, the thinner the warps are, and the thinner the wefts have to be. They should always be thinner than the warps!

In order to have a opening (entrance/doorway) in the tower, I let all ends (alternate thin and thick ends) start on the same warp and end after almost a whole round, at the neighbouring warp. I could plait the thin ends into the frame upwards or downwards along the opening. Afterwards, I used mainly the over-under-over-under-principle, with one or two wefts at the time (depending on thickness and overall assessment). Where the materials were stiff and thick I used *over two-under one*. Based on an overall assessment, I decided whether to tread the weft over or under the warp.

In order to tighten the structure and make it possible to build a tower, I had to tie a rope around the whole structure and tie the ends at the top. Only then I had full control over the finishing stages.

The tower roof was plaited using thin branches, and finally, the warp materials were lashed together using tarred hemp twine from the fishery industry, called merlin. This cord is water-resistant and provides a feeling of a authenticity and tradition.

It soon proved almost impossible to regain the same stability after moving to a new location. When I was about to finish the roof standing in a ladder up along the tower structure, the root ends several times slipped out of their holes in the ground. However, the lattice was so solid that the shape hardly changed even though I sometimes ended up hanging with all my weight in the warps.

I was necessary to hammer wedges into the ground beside the warp poles to secure the structure. I also fortified some central areas with lashings of thin steel wire.

I chose to cover the roof with birchbark. The plan was to lay sheets of birchbark in circular shapes, starting at the bottom following the roofing tile principle. First, I made spirals of the lattice material approximately 25 cm apart up along the whole roof. The ends were partly plaited into the roof structure and partly lashed together with hemp twine. The spirals lay 10–20 cm outside the roof, and the ends were plaited into the roof.

The birchbark I had at my disposal was very stiff and curly. I soaked it in water, but it didn't change character. I straightened the sheets using force by placing them in a wide plastic container with Leca blocks on top. Then I filled up with water. The heat affected the lignin in the bark, straightening the sheets. The next day I could pour out the water and make use of the birchbark. The sheets still had a tendency to curl!

I chose to allow the bark sheets to curl around the roof spiral. Consequently, the white side of the birchbark faced down. In structures where it is essential to protect the roof against humidity and rot, the white side should always face upwards. Then the white outer bark would be covered by turf.

I lay the birch bark with the brown side facing upwards, letting the birchbark curl around the branch spirals and in the warps in the roof.

I

I attached the bottom layer by letting the lower end of the birchbark sheets curl around the bottom branch spiral. The upper end was stuck underneath the second lowest branch spiral, so that it curled around the roof structure's intertwined warps. I allowed neighbouring sheets of birchbark to overlap slightly.

On the next round, I followed the same procedure, letting the lower end of the birchbark sheets curl around the second lowest branch spiral and overlap the bottom round of bark.

Strips of birchbark were also used to fortify the (door) openings in the towers. In this way, the birchbark was repeated as material and contributed to unify the structures into an aesthetic whole.

After the towers had been exposed to wind and weather for one month, it seemed as if the birchbark clung to the roof more firmly for each day that passed.

Aesthetics – the use of aesthetic effects



Student project, HiA, Dømmesmoen 2004



Student project, HiA, Dømmesmoen 2004



Student project, HiA, Dømmesmoen 2004

My own lattice structures at HiA 2004

Human-made lattice represents a practical and an aesthetic way of separating culture from nature. The lattice binds together, organizes and decorates the wild thicket, and represents a modest and adaptable cultural intervention in nature.

In this project, all lateral shoots were removed from the warp and weft materials. This was done in order to strengthen the aesthetic impression. The chosen lattice structures were repeated both strictly rhythmically and more irregularly and non-rhythmically. Here, the irregular materials contributed to creating aesthetic tension where the unforeseen became repetitions in line, form, shape, space in-between and number.

The openings were given round and arched forms as an aesthetic variable over the arched lines and over the forms already present in the tower structures. Sometimes we only used thin weft materials which easily could be bent into patterns, other times only thick, non-pliable weft materials used in lengths of only one meter. These formed a contrast to the bent materials. Their short lengths resulted in many ends within a limited area, which again could be enhanced as aesthetic elements, for instance by use of colour.

The upper end of the birchbark sheets were stuck into the structure, laid according to the roof tiling principle. The spirals and the airspace between them enhanced the aesthetic effect.

The tower form was repeated five times. The space between the towers, the towers' diameter, height and shape were varied and repeated, without aspiring to exact symmetry. This enhanced the organic character, the adaption to the surroundings and the aesthetic impression in general.

The students' work

In our project the students had a template as a basis, as regards form, line, construction and choice of materials. The template should stimulate to a piece of aesthetic work, provide aesthetic experiences and enhance work discipline and endurance.



Student project, HiA 2003

In order to maintain the idea of a cathedral and to ensure unity, I chose to plant the warps for the next four towers, ensuring a set design for the construction project. Within a fixed framework the groups had full freedom to experiment with the lattice structures. One group chose vertical wefts. Another group chose to include a section of cross-plaited yellow willow shoots. A third group made use of the arch as a common style element while a fourth group used crossing warps where the crossing points were lashed with thin green willow shoots. These become aesthetic elements frequently repeated in the structure.



Student project, HiA 2003

The original tower represented the entrance to the village. The other towers enclosed a circular courtyard. These towers were narrower than the first, each having an entrance facing the courtyard. This village square could be used by teachers, primary school pupils and kindergarten children for storytelling and gatherings dealing with various historical, dramatic and musical themes.

In the forest behind the village, various decorative elements were hung up, a sun, spheres and other sculptural forms. In this way, this room was also set in motion, becoming an active part of the composition. Consequently, the village could serve as a place for invigorating imagination and as inspiration for creative and constructive work, for the young and the old.



The tower village was immediately put to use by playing children. HiA 2003

Live willow

The following year we wished to experiment using live willow shoots striking root. 3–4 m long willow shoots were imported from Denmark and planted on the lawn in the same area where the towers had been, but a little further towards the edge of the lawn. Different departments at Dømmesmoen had long expressed a desire to have a maze of live willow.

A source of inspiration was the Austrian Jugend-style painter Gustav Klimt's painting of a black tree where all branches have spiral shape. Such a spiral could connect ancient cult mazes from places like Dømmesmoen with modern art. And we could make a form exciting for children to explore.

Already in 2004, we made, in cooperation with a Danish willow construction firm, a hut where we stuck two and two willow shoots in the same hole (approx. 20 cm deep). The shoots from every second hole were bent towards each other and lashed together at the top with plastic strips, in a semispherical shape. The shoots in-between were bent towards the same side and woven as wefts in a loom with the standing shoots as warps. Remember to make an odd number of holes, as is basketry.

We made room for a door opening, and allowed the shoots to strike root before the rest of the spiral was made. The inner room was 2–3 m in diameter. From the door opening we likewise plaited a tunnel which curved in a spiral shape around the room.

The rows forming the sides were placed approximately 1 m apart. They were plaited together at the top so that the form closed like a snail shell. It then became a closed spiral form, and between this spiral an open spiral emerged. Therefore, the maze became a very popular place for children to race one another. A small problem was that the children running in the open spiral soon discovered that they could break their way through to the closed form. We just had to accept that the breakthroughs were part of the aesthetics. These are passageways created in play, and must be allowed to exist. They become permanent and natural traces, like moose tracks through the landscape. I eventually touched up these openings so that seemed as if they were intended to be there.

The maze structure suffered somewhat from drought the first summer. But it turned out that it had struck root. And the next summer, new root suckers emerged which were woven together with the rest of the structure. Harvesting/trimming of new shoots from the structures should be done in spring, at the time they can be planted and expand the installation.

The spiral maze are used in children's play and in connection with wedding photography. This is highly suitable, since maze forms probably were used also in Norway in fertility ceremonies during the Bronze and Iron Age.

It turned out that the willow shoots were planted in an area where it earlier had been some workshop buildings. The soil was shallow and the plants were easily exposed to drought. Plenty of watering during the first growing season was important. On more shadowy spots and in places with deeper soil, the plants will survive on their own.

In April it can be wise to trim such structures. Shoots can either be plaited into the existing structure or be cut and planted where something is missing. They can also be used for expansions and new plantings. In this way, we become producers of fresh willow shoots each spring.

Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø i Telemark, spring 2008

In a collaboration with the folk singer Agnes Buen Garnås I was invited to make a live willow hut in Gullbring Kindergarten in Bø in Telemark County in the spring of 2008. The work was carried out early in May (the best time is April). I intended to make a igloo-shaped hut with a small tunnel. We had already made use of the igloo-form as part of a scenography with a matted "hut" or "mound" over tunnel tent poles, in a performance in the culture centre Gullbring, where Agnes Buen Garnås sang and told old legends in her own project "Fugl Fønix" – "The Phoenix".

I drew a circle on the ground using a lever, with myself as the circle centre. With the lever, I made holes in the circle line, approx. 20 cm apart and 20 cm deep. I made sure it was an odd number of holes due to plaiting of willow twigs at a later stage. I asked one of the tallest children to stand in the middle of the circle and planted a 2.5 m long willow shoot on one side of the circle line and another shoot diametrically across. When I bent them towards each other, they formed a perfect arch above the child's head. Then I lashed them together with plastic strips.

By this time, 10–12 enthusiastic children had gathered around us. I decided that they all should take part and organized a queue. The first child in the queue inserted a willow shoot in the next hole and another in the hole diametrically across. One child after the other stood in the middle, and the child who inserted the shoots in the holes bent the willow shoots towards

the child in the centre. I formed the ends into an arch, and the child had to take a few steps back to see if these shoots formed a perfect or a lopsided arch above the other child's head. When the arch was considered perfect, the willow shoots were lashed together with strips. We continued with new shoots, new children and new assessments. It was enjoyable to see how able the children were at measuring by eye.

This can be recommended as a good aesthetic introduction to mathematics, architecture and art. The problem with this living installation, however, arose a month later at the onset of a long drought period. But it seems to have given enough fresh shoots, which can be plaited into the structure and give it new life next spring. Consequently, it is important to water such structures as a newly planted tree during the first season. Later, they might be exposed to rougher treatment, such as climbing.



The author and children from Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø in Telemark, spring 2008



The hut is finding its shape. From Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø in Telemark spring 2008



From Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø in Telemark, spring 2008



The live willow hut needed care and watering, Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø in Telemark 2009



But it is also a nice playground, Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø in Telemark 2009

Nature art in pre-school teacher training

Pre-school teacher training, HiA and UiA

The main base for my nature art projects has been the pre-school teacher training at HiA, both through the basic training and through in-depth study subjects in arts and crafts at the departments at Fløyheia in Arendal, at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad and at Gimlemoen in Kristiansand. In the basic training we have some years carried out a project dealing with small insects, in collaboration with the faculties of natural sciences. Here we have focused on forms like snails, ladybirds, butterflies, ants, mosquitoes, spiders, pupae and cocoons.

A general introduction to terms in land art in schools and kindergartens

In schools and kindergartens the aim is that young people rediscover and see nature with toddlers' unbiased and open mind, guided by the teacher into contemporary land art and its experimental ways to visualize man's aesthetic interaction with nature. Consequently, we avoid all clichés where it is almost predetermined that *out there in the woods we must make a troll out of a moss-grown tree stump*.

Instead, we perceive nature as a work of art with points, lines, forms, colours and textures. We consider different ways of aesthetic treatment of nature through studies of land art or even environmental art, where we wish to emphasize nature's value for different local cultures. Some basic work methods in land art are listed below.

Introduction to nature art and aesthetic documentation continues

- A) Find a form in the landscape and display it in a new way by filling it with a new material, for instance flowers, rose hips or berries.
- B) Follow a line/lines in the landscape and enhance this/these by choosing a material (preferably in a contrastive colour) belonging to the same environment.
- C) Follow an insect's (e.g. ant/snail) movements, and visualize these by laying down a contrastive material/colour from the same environment in the insect's *footprints*.

Each group draw lots for these assignments. (When finished, continue with next assignment.)

The work is carried out in the seashore with water, sand, stones, rocks, trees, bushes, flowers, leaves, shells, snails, ants etc. The groups can swap assignments among themselves. Plan and carry out the work while taking digital photographs. Then continue with the next assignment!



Following a line in nature using materials from the site. Student project, HiA 2006



Filling spaces in-between using a material from the site. Student project, HiA 2006



A cubistic artwork in a cubistic landscape. Student project, HiA 2003

- D) Make use of natural forms from one or several students' body/body parts, and let them become part of a natural environment by incorporating the human body with forms and materials found on the site.



Repetition of water ripples using materials from the site. Student project, HiA 2006

- E) Illustrate water ripples in a new dimension using new materials.
- F) Choose a form in the terrain, on a rock, beach etc. and repeat this form in the same environment using materials found on the site.



Bark cracks filled with new materials. Student project, HiA 2006

- G) Choose a form/line from the vegetation (e.g. bark cracks, branches and roots on trees), and enhance and repeat this using materials from the same environment.

- H) Find lines and shapes in the stem, or formed by tree roots and fill them with different natural materials in order to create an artwork in the tree or on the ground. See photos from Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden.

Photograph the completed artworks under optimal conditions! The groups are responsible for making photo printouts before the next arts and crafts class.

Subsequently, the groups work with documentation and their own photo printouts. (Paper cutter, glue, strict composition with simple, aesthetic texts/descriptions.)



Emphasizing lines and shapes in a tree. Student project UIA, Dømmesmoen 2009



Emphasizing lines and shapes in a tree. Student project UIA, Dømmesmoen 2009



Emphasizing lines and shapes in a tree. Student project UIA, Dømmesmoen 2009

Small insects – what about nature art?

Interdisciplinary collaboration between the faculties of natural sciences, arts and crafts, drama, music and education

The theme was selected by the faculty of natural sciences. In arts and crafts, I had in this connection tried to build a bridge between nature art and natural sciences. First, I introduced the class to nature art and aesthetic documentation by showing them artworks and earlier student projects. Afterwards, the class was divided into groups of 3–4 students.

Assignment:

The groups shall make a nature collage inspired by an insect. They are free to choose working with for instance pebbles and berries, sticks and flowers, only flowers, only berries, only pebbles etc. The artworks are to be made on a location where they fit into the surroundings due to affinity in form, lines and materials.

Nature collages, structures and sculptures

The work is performed near Gimlemoen in Kristiansand and at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad, dependent on the student's place of study.



Ladybird. Student project, HiA 2006



Snail shell. Student project, HiA 2005



Butterfly. Student project. HiA 2004



Spider web. Student project, HiA 2005



Butterfly pupa of plaited willow with apples. Student project, HiA 2005



Butterfly pupa of plaited willow with apples. Student project, HiA 2005



Grasshopper of lashed willow in the park at Dømmesmoen. My own artwork 2005

Man and nature

After the insect project had been repeated in more or less the same way for four years, I felt in the autumn of 2007 that it needed some renewal, at least as far as nature art was concerned. Did the insects really have to look so naturalistic?

The grasshopper above gave me the idea to let insects, man and nature blend. After all, we are all part of the same nature and consist of the same substances. Working with such a holistic view would possibly help us seeing ourselves as part of nature, on the same level as other creatures. I immediately felt that this must be an important perspective in a time where our surroundings are increasingly threatened by man's detachment from nature. How about challenging the students to transform in order to fit even better into the world of insects by use of natural materials and cultural measures? However, perhaps the world of insects may need to be influenced aesthetically in order to welcome its new guests?

The human being in a world of insects

The groups had in advance experimented with different basic land art expressions in nature. On the basis of shown works of land art and the group members' creativity, groups of 2–3 students worked with the following assignment:

Body and nature as common land art area

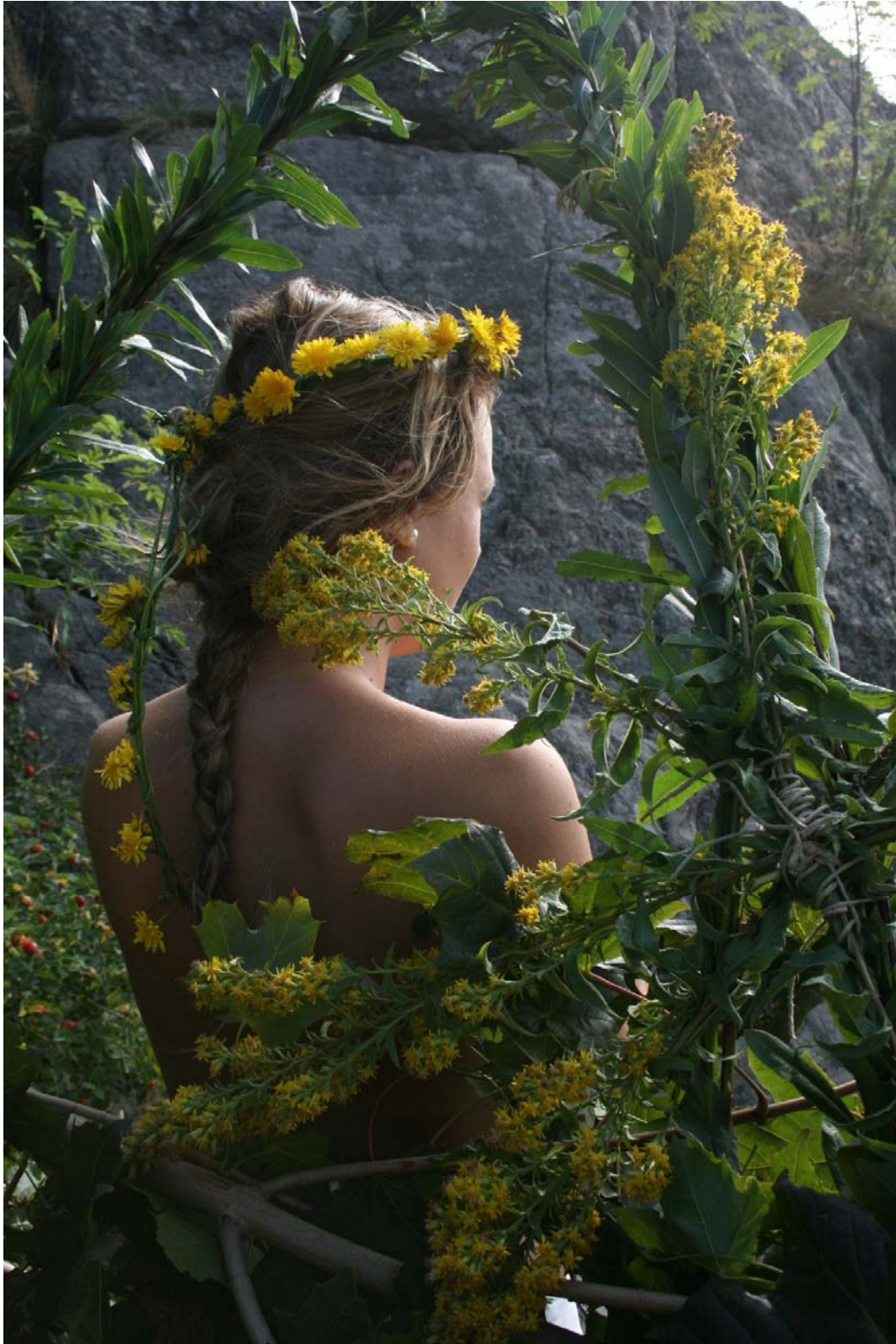
On the basis of the theme insects, transform the group members' appearance using natural materials in order to fit into a certain insect habitat, and, in addition, decorate this habitat for this feast!

Techniques as basic lashing, plaiting, weaving and pasting onto skin are included in this assignment. Natural pasting materials, as for instance water, plant oils, butter, mineral jelly can be used.

An important didactic point with this assignment is to let the participants experience bodily that they are part of the same nature we share with all creatures. The human being as part of our common nature and our common land art arena.



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2007



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2007



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2008. Processed in Photoshop

A pre-school teacher student's play with aesthetic effects in nature and on the computer screen – an inspiring impulse towards greener clothes design.

From insect feast to fairy dance and wood nymph allure

The creative energy ignited by the insect feast engendered ideas of nature art work in arts and crafts in another class of pre-school teacher students, who earlier in the autumn had dealt with the theme dance in drawing and painting. In Norwegian folklore, this is expressed in fairy dance, as in the song “Trolldans” – “Troll dance”: *Heigh-ho, you ethereal being! Lightfooted we enter the dance tonight beneath the mountains!* Since all students in this group were women, this evoke certain associations to mermaids and alluring wood nymphs.

As earlier, I gave them a brief introduction and added some statements I had obtained regarding Finnish design after interviewing designers from Vasa in Finland in 1997 in connection with this theme. The designers all agreed that Finnish design was linked with the Finns' close

affinity with nature, and that it boiled down to “*peeling off, peeling off, peeling off!*” Peeling off all that is superfluous in order to get to the core of aesthetics and Finnish design!

With this in mind, the female students went on an excursion without their teacher. Naturally, they wanted to take the photographs themselves!

Nature, skin, culture and cultivation of aesthetic effects became the core of their expression! Is it the goblins from *Ronia, the Robber’s Daughter* by Astrid Lindgren playing tricks, or is it the heritage from our ancient Nordic nature religions emerging from oblivion?



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2007

Wood nymphs in the shape of lightly clothed blond women are to such an extent present in Norwegian folklore that right up to World War II people involved in mountain dairy farming had accounts of encounters with these female beings. That they possessed a magical power of attraction on men was an established fact in folk culture. Those who followed the alluring wood nymphs seldom returned!



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2007

Exhibited in photo montages, the projects displayed an experimental use of crafts, techniques and materials, aesthetic consideration and creative play! The students revealed great joy and delight. They had found an outlet for their aptitude for decorating their own bodies in harmony with nature. They had acted out different roles from folklore, which also is deeply rooted in nature, just like modern environmental art.

Also within the area *man and nature*, or *man as nature*, there lies an unexplored field for land art and environmental art. Or for nature art, if we wish to use a simpler and more general term.

Bodies adjusted to nature in “KIA-land art”

Christian Intercultural Association (in Norwegian KIA) is an organization which works for multicultural fellowship and for equality, mutual caring and friendship irrespective of language, cultural or religious boundaries.

17 participants mainly from African countries attended the land art course, called KIA-land art, at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad. The course lasted for three days in August 2009.

We started with an introduction to land art by presenting artists like Andy Goldsworthy and Nils-Udo, and then from my own students' artworks at the University of Agder. I also presented a DVD from You-tube, about the "Painted People in Ethiopia", called the Omo people. This to remind us all about cultural backgrounds from times when we all lived more in contact with nature.

The Surma and Mursi peoples from up the Omo River use their bodies as canvases, working with whatever materials they find in nature. The photographer Hans Silvester has lived together with them for six years.

I asked the participants to try to memorize simple craft-traditions from their own cultural backgrounds that could easily be linked to human bodies; like the making of braids, pony-tails, clothes making, designing and construction of flower circles for heads and breasts, and body-painting by use of natural materials, like local clay. Construction technology could also be based upon techniques from basketry and willow-weaving from construction of fences and cottages.

Materials and techniques would be aesthetic elements for making the participants neat, and in harmony with the natural site they choose as scenery. They could also work out this natural scenery so that it adjusted more to their own appearance. Together with natural materials from the chosen site, mainly human skin and hair should be visible for the photo session.

The process and the completed scenery would be photographed. And the participants were told that the photos would be used in an aesthetic documentation for an exhibition in the church linked to KIA in Arendal.

Exercise:

You are supposed to use a simple craft-tradition from your own cultural background by use of Norwegian materials, on your own or your group members' bodies, and then place yourselves in Norwegian natural sites, like an apple tree, an oak tree, a rowan tree, a seaweed environment or a willow tree environment. The results are to be photographed for an exhibition to be seen by yourselves and other Norwegians. In this way you transform elements from your own cultures into Norwegian nature, and you may affect Norwegian ways of thinking, regarding arts and cultures.

Exercises for the groups in the site at Dømmesmoen

Adjust yourselves visually:

to an apple tree, an oak tree, to a willow tree with thin hanging branches, to an elm tree with thin hanging branches, to a rowan tree, to a flowery meadow, to the earth and soil at Dømmesmoen, to the boulders in the forest moraine-site, or you can choose a site and materials after presenting your idea to your art professor.

Possible materials:

The human body, a natural site, flowers, berries, fruits, branches, sticks, willow, reed, seaweed, ferns, clay (for body-painting), sand, stones, wire, thread, or whatever you choose.

Possible tools:

Garden-scissors, needles, hands or whatever you need.

If you possess a digital camera, you should bring it along to make photographs from your group works and performances.

On the day when we performed the aesthetic part of the course, it was raining heavily. That is why most of this kind of work was made as indoor activities. When the groups had finished transforming their participants, they had to go out to be photographed in their chosen environments.

If it was the pictures from the Omo people, or the knowledge that they were working on a university site that made some of them somewhat skeptical and even frightened in the beginning, is difficult to say. But when I emphasized their own visualcultural memories and the playfulness in the didactic way of working, they really started to cooperate and develop ideas. And for some hours the workshop was a pot of laughter, creativity and aesthetics.

Documentation:

On the following Monday evening, we made aesthetic documentation with paper-prints of photos from the land art exercise, glued to cardboard like posters and mounted on the walls in the church basement.

The participants were told that the pictures might be used in various presentations of body-land art, without using the names or origins of the participants.



Seaweed weavery, KIA workshop, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad 2009



A ring like this is made and worn in Eritrea during the Easter celebration



Adjusting to a rowantree, KIA workshop, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad 2009



Adjusting to the willow, KIA workshop, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad 2009



Adjusting to an rowentree, KIA workshop, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad 2009
The body-paint is made by local clay from Grimstad.

The KIA-land art now inspired me and my students in the pre-school- teachers education to make a new project.

Body- land art with students

So the following lecture for my students was: “how to adjust yourself and your group visually to a small site at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad”.

The site could be a special tree, like an apple tree or a rowantree. It could even be a pond in the park with its sea weed-materials.

Again I shoved the film about the Omo-people, and the new pictures from the KIA-land art. I also made a small introduction about creativity and the necessity to cross mental borderlines in our own minds.

I even referred to my designer colleagues from Finland who explained finish design as “the necessity to take away, take away, take away”. Just to obtain that “less is more”, also within art and design.

My students were very happy to start, and heir playfulness and creativity seemed to have no narrow minded borders.



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2009



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2009



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 200



Student project in pre-school teacher training at UiA 2009

Nature art – winter

Winter memories from childhood

Most people who have grown up in the cold part of the globe, before the onset of climate change, can recall winters with snow and ice and the excitement and challenges winter conditions engendered in the young and old.

The same rules and challenges in nature art apply irrespective of season. During traditional winters we are challenged with new materials and forms in snow, ice and frost, icicles, frozen running water, snow balls, flakes of ice and snow crust, as well as with forms and colours we can encapsulate in ice, cast in ice or chop, cut and shape in snow or ice.

Still, the border zones between snow and green lawn, ice and sandy beach, rock and snow and between snow and flowery meadows in spring provide fantastic contrasts which tickle our imagination. In such a context, it can become difficult, and maybe not even desirable, to draw a sharp line between land art and environmental art. Perhaps the term nature art might cover both these fields?



Childhood's ice ferns with highly varied patterns which could be altered by our own breath



Snow sculpture, student project, HiA, Hovden 2005



Snow sculpture, student project HiA, Hovden 2005

Winter art in Lapland

In January 2007 I had the privilege to participate in a workshop organized by the Nordic art education network Edda Norden held in Lainio Snow Village in Finnish Lapland. This project was headed by professor Timo Jokela at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi. By way of introduction, he clarified terms within environmental art, which I have referred to earlier in this book. Jokela's artworks in snow and ice are firmly rooted into this field of nature art.

For a decade, the University of Lapland has taken part in an annual collaboration with the local tourist trade in Lainio in Lapland. Lainio was earlier a Sami dwelling place, and in ancient times a Sami cult site.

A local family has built a village of cabins for rental all year round. Each winter, local craftsmen build a snow village consisting of a snow hotel with individually designed and decorated rooms, a restaurant, icebar and disco and streets with sculptures in snow and ice.

After the first snowfalls in October/November, they start casting a *ring wall* of snow – approx. 600 m long and 3 m high – around the village. They erect large shuttering boards connected by iron bolts on each side of a 2 m wide gap. The gap is then filled with snow from snow cannons. The shuttering boards are gradually moved until the whole ring wall stands fully casted in snow.

Then, special balloons with diameters up to 10 m are inflated on strategic places within the wall and sprayed with water, which immediately freezes to ice in temperatures around 30 degrees below zero Celsius.

When the ice roofs are 3050 cm thick, the balloons are removed, leaving incredibly solid domes which light can filter through. The lower half of the gap between the domes is filled with snow from snow cannons. These gaps are later hollowed out to become sleeping caves/bedrooms.

In December/January, a group of ice cutters cut ice blocks measuring approx. 50 x 70 x 250 cm from the local lake. The blocks are transported to the snow village construction site on tractors. Here they become building materials for interiors such as benches and tables in the restaurant, a bar and a disco scene. Blocks are also placed on streets and in rooms, for later sculpting.

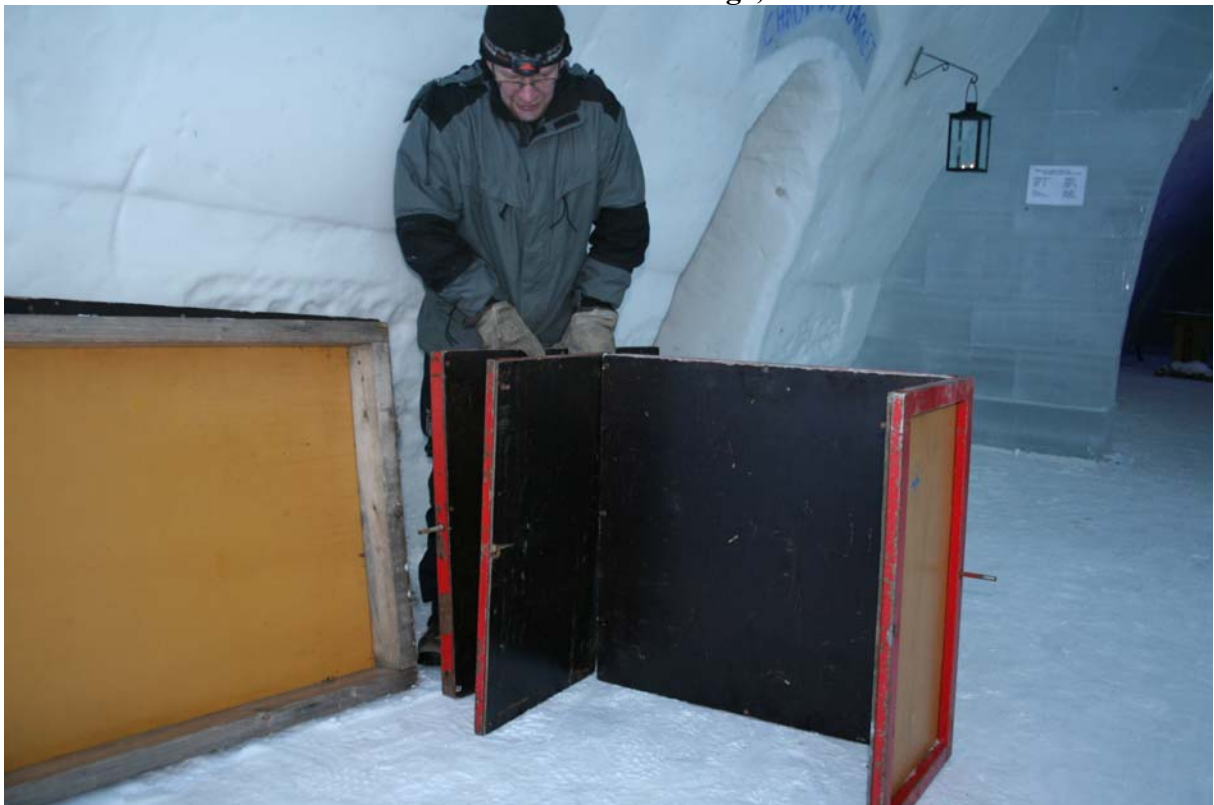
Students for the University of Lapland and their guest students are invited to carve sculptures, reliefs in all bedrooms and on the walls in the bar, restaurant and in the streets, as well as headboards and aesthetic decorations on the bedroom walls and ceilings.



Part of the ring wall, domes, main entrance and construction site in Lainio Snow Village, Lainio 2007



The main entrance of ice blocks in Lainio Snow Village, Lainio 2007



Professor Timo Jokela demonstrates mounting of custom made frames for casting of snow blocks for sculpting, Lainio 2007



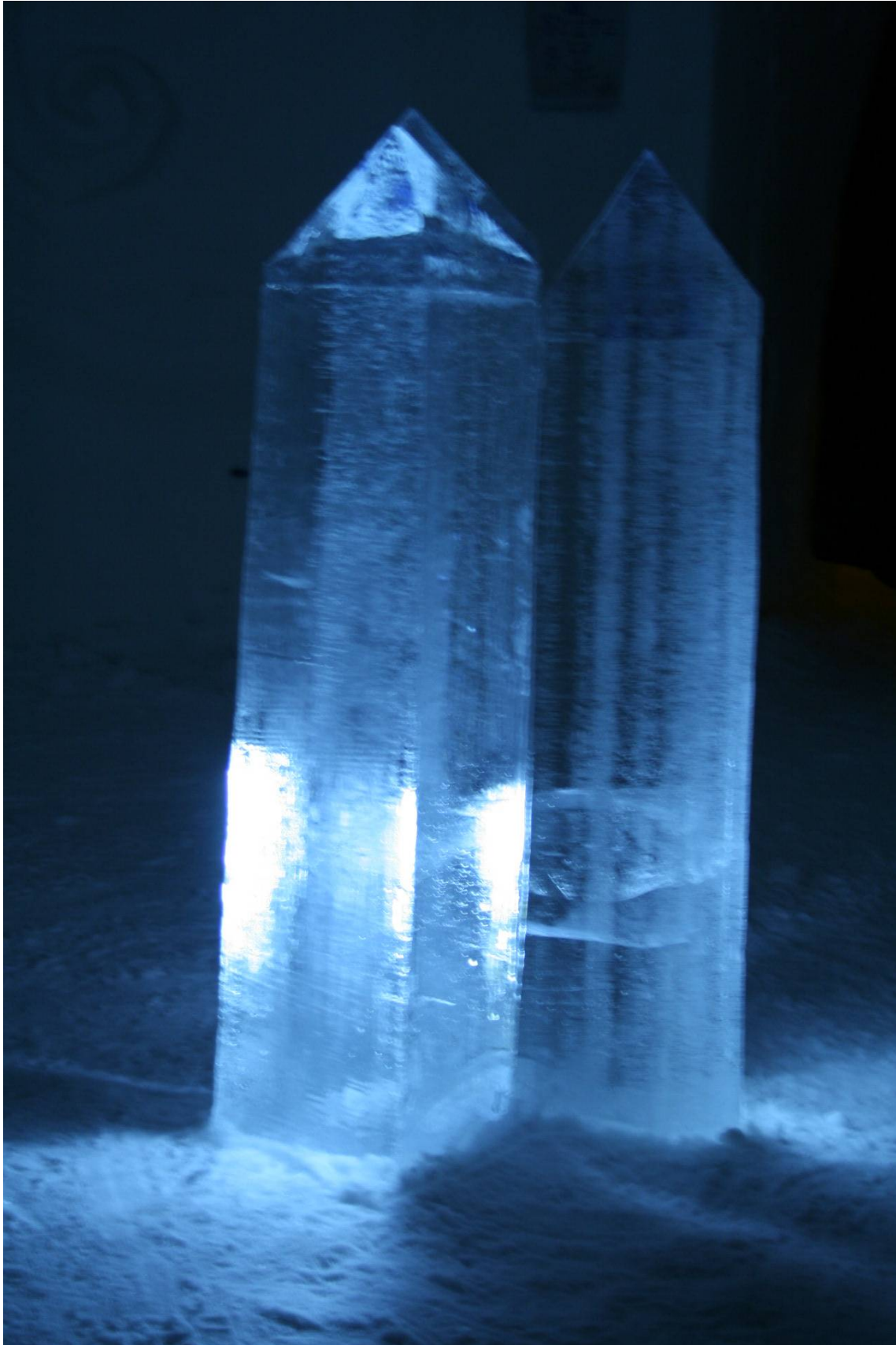
A local craftsman demonstrates use of an iron to make the ice smooth and crystal clear, Lainio 2007



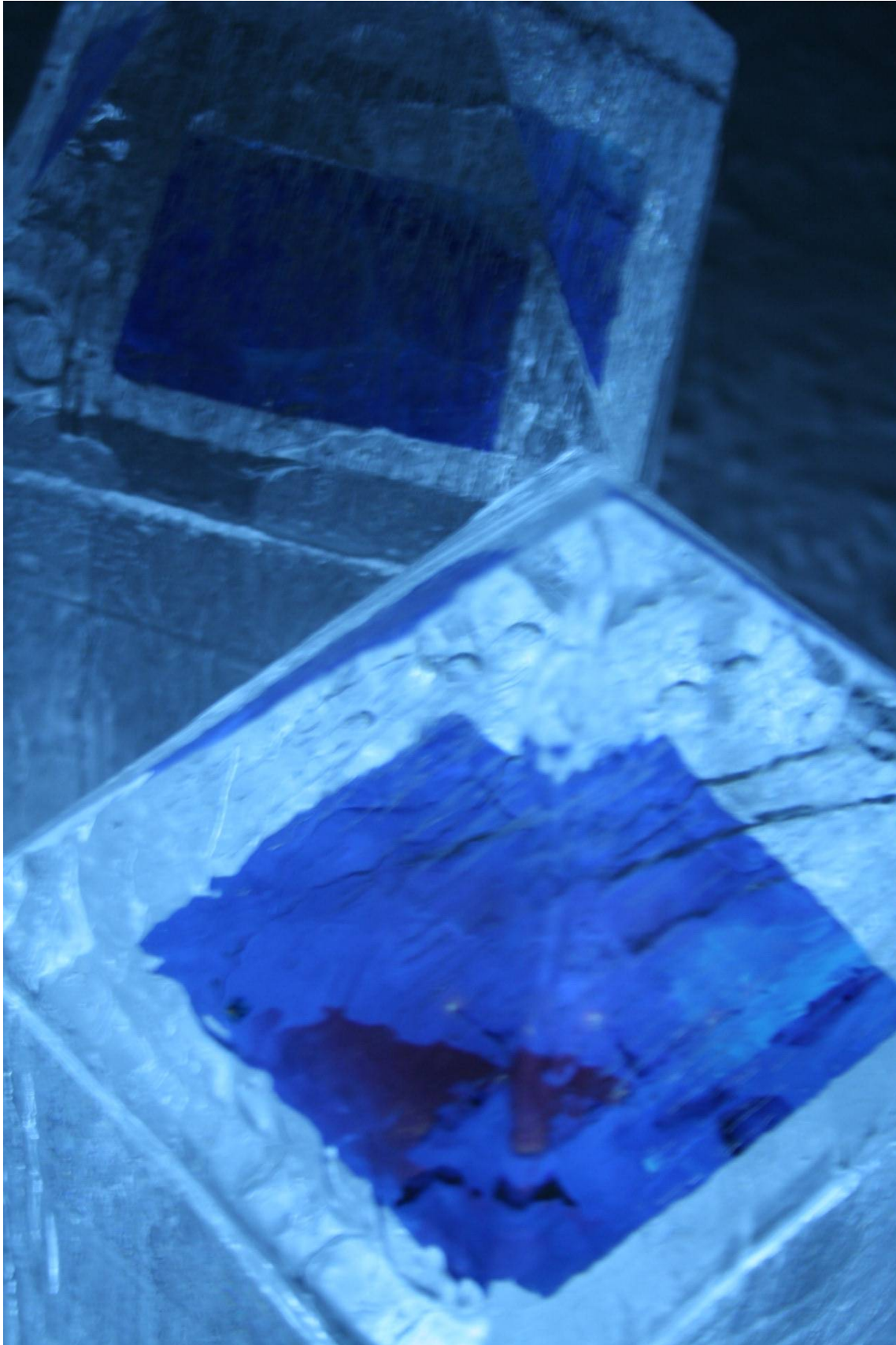
Myself in full swing with a chainsaw on a ice sculpture, together with the international coordinator from Copenhagen Day- and Evening College of Teacher Education, Lene Bang-Jensen, Lainio 2007



Ice sculpture in Lainio Snow Village, made together with the international coordinator from Copenhagen Day- and Evening College of Teacher Education, Lene Bang-Jensen, Lainio 2007



Ice sculpture in Lainio Snow Village, made together with the international coordinator from Copenhagen Day- and Evening College of Teacher Education, Lene Bang-Jensen, Lainio 2007



An overhead transparency encapsulated in ice between two ice blocks. Ice sculpture in Lainio Snow Village, made together with the international coordinator from Copenhagen Day- and Evening College of Teacher Education, Lene Bang-Jensen, Lainio 2007



Wall reliefs in the bar in Lainio Snow Village, made by Heidi Lindeman, Sanna Kauppinen, Lisa Tobiasson and Jan van Boeckel, Lainio 2007



Headboard decoration and design in Lainio Snow Hotel, made by students at Telemark University College: Maria Olsen and Sivelin Kjølstad, in co-operation with Assistant Professor Jostein Sandven, Lainio 2007

Snow and ice technology

Sculptural works can be made in a big snowbank with wet or hardpacked snow. But if we tread snow hard in a mould with straight walls, as shown in the previous chapter, or preferably, fill the space between smooth waterproof plywood plates with snow from a snow cannon, we obtain a block of very firm snow when the plywood plates are removed. The plates can be held together with luggage straps.

In all three cases the casted snow block can be formed by means of a saw, a spade, an axe and a pickaxe. In the last case, where artificial snow from a snow cannon is used in combination with foot treading, the block will be so hard after a couple of frost nights that a chainsaw can be used. In return, the block will provide many possibilities for sculpting.

I have often let the students make three-dimensional models in clay within a theme, with precise downscaled dimensions in relation to the snow block. The sculpture models are heated, so they can withstand frost. They are then taken out in the forming environment. In order to ease our perceptive faculty and visual memory, it may be a good idea to outline the intended sculpture with charcoal on the snow block, having the clay model at hand through the whole artistic process.

Large special made chisels are handy for detailed cutting both in hard snow and ice. For ice work, a chainsaw is an invaluable tool. If the work is carried out indoors, only electric chainsaws must be used. This is a handy tool for all cutting of ice and snow where we talk about relative big structures. It is important to observe that ice will become smooth and crystal clear by use of a hot iron. An iron can also be used when shaping a surface.

If we work with water which shall be frozen to ice in blocks or in moulds, it is preferable to let the water freeze outdoors, so that the oxygen in the water has the chance to evaporate before turning solid. If we must do the freezing in a deepfreeze, water from the hot tap is preferable. Warm water undergoes a faster freezing process than cold water and contains less oxygen, which creates a dull non-transparent ice. If we start out with ice blocks made from warm water, frozen in a deepfreeze, with surfaces treated with a hot iron, we can obtain very clean and beautiful surfaces. If we want coloured ice, I recommend blue watercolour or confectioner's colouring dissolved in the warm water before freezing.

Welding together two ice blocks requires temperatures below zero. It can be wise to use the iron to smoothen the surfaces that are to be welded together, and mount them with some water in the joint. If we shall weld ice or snow or two snow blocks, a hole should be dug out in the largest block, so that the smaller block can be inserted into the bigger one. As a binding agent one can use a mixture of snow, crushed ice and water in a porridge-like consistency. In 10 degrees below zero, for instance, such a joint will become very strong.

Didactic challenges in winter

Use snow/ice and another material which can add colour and atmosphere to the artwork!

Practical challenges:

Exploring winter aesthetics through playful activity and an experimental approach to winter materials, like frost, snow (tracks in snow), casted snowballs' and snow blocks' (basic forms)

possibilities, snow crystals, ice, ice flakes and lumps, light and light reflection in snow/ice/frost, and recording this aesthetics and activity in digital photographs.

- Experiment with winter materials and aesthetic possibilities by emphasizing aesthetic effects, like a chosen forms variation in shape, size, grouping, density, space in-between, cold/warm contrast, colour, light, texture, decor etc.



Student work, HiA 2005



Student project, HiA, at Hovden 2005



Photo on a transparency frozen into an ice block. Student project HiA 2007



Coloured ice frozen in eggshells in a nest of winter straws. Student work, HiA 2007

Assignment for 3. year pre-school teacher students, Gimlemoen and Dømmesmoen, winter 2007

Snow/winter (approx. 1 week)

- 1) In either a snow-free or snow-rich winter, groups of students shall seek to visualize new aesthetic possibilities for use of winter elements outdoors.
- 2) On the basis of one of these possibilities, the groups shall create an aesthetic tree-dimensional expression in an exciting winter environment.
- 3) In all groups, the process, products and didactic thoughts shall be documented visually as aesthetic documentation and presented in the class.
- 4) The products shall be presented as aesthetic as possible in a separate documentation.

Suggestions for nature art assignments in different environments

These suggestions are primarily intended for the biotopes at Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden, but are of such a general character that many of them can apply for most natural environments in the Nordic countries, and in different seasons.

Furthermore, the assignments are well suited as a basis for work with nature art in kindergartens and schools, where the teachers/art teachers adapt them for the different target groups.

in the forest

- Study tree roots along a footpath and fill the spaces in-between with materials related to the season: snow, fruit, rowan berries, coloured autumn leaves, moss etc. Clean the roots and compose a picture
- Study the bark cracks on trees, stumps etc. and fill them with for instance berries, flowers or snow
- Choose one of the lowest branches on a large tree and accentuate its lines and forms by placing for instance leaves, snowballs etc. along the branch
- It is sunny weather and the trees cast shadows. Choose some of the shadows and fill them with a material, like cones, snow, coloured sawdust etc. Rake the area around the shadows
- Decorate cavities in trees and healed branch breaks on trunks, using for instance flower garlands or balls made of leaves
- Make balls of plaited sallow, willow or Siberian dogwood, hang them in trees and photograph/film them as sunlight is filtrated through the lattice
- Join leaves together, hang them in trees and observe the surfaces filtering the sunlight
- Structures: make a sculpture in an open forest glen with tree trunks partially interwoven
- Make lattice architecture of long poles, where some poles are inserted into the ground to become warps, while others are used as weft material woven like a wispy basket
- The same as above, but with rooted warps. Remove trees within a circular space in a thicket. Allow a circle of slender trunks to remain standing. Clear the thicket outside this circle. Use a lattice technique with the removed materials as wefts and create a room installation
- Make a lattice of thin branches as a "translucent tapestry" between trees of similar species. Photograph this under various weather and light conditions
- Find a fallen branch and cover the branch form's lines with for instance red leaves pasted on with water or wallpaper paste
- Cover tree trunks with for instance red autumn leaves pasted on with water or wallpaper paste

- Continue the forest's vertical form elements by laying painted logs across the grass meadow

in or near a pond

- Plait a small raft of leaves. Fill it with berries or flowers in matching colours. Place it on the pond for photographing
- Plait a raft of reeds. Fill it with berries or flowers
- Make use of a coalesced humus surface in the pond. Make a nest/hiding place for ducks with plaited materials. Decorate with materials available
- Remove the bark on willow sticks, colour them with acrylic paint and lash them together into a sculpture. Place it on the water, along the water's edge, in the forest, on a footpath, in a meadow, in the school yard etc.

in a meadow, in glens or between stones

- Make a "nest" of pebbles, resembling eggs lying in the sand, between patches of grass etc. Lage "reir" av små rullestein som egg liggende i sand, mellom gress etc. Add drops of water as speckles on the eggs
- Make a "nest" of sticks from a thicket applying lattice techniques
- Decorate a boulder with leaves pasted on with water or ice
- Make lines of leaves with similar colour shade and form and place them along the edge of a meadow, along the water's edge, a glen, a footpath etc.
- The same as above, but follow an ant path or moose tracks into the forest
- Place bait in a special formation. Let snails, sea gulls etc. gather in this formation.
- Place fresh fruit on a naked branch (with or without snow)
- Make lattice sculpture/room installation illuminated with torches
- Decorate a spruce tree with garlands (like a Christmas tree) made of tangled autumn leaves
- Make a tight lattice decorated with bunches of rowan berries in the lattice panes
- Decorate a footpath as to a party with rows of colourful flowers or leaves
- Make a colour circle of autumn leaves, fruits, berries, nuts, cones, shells etc.

- Make blankets of leaves in order to display various shades of one colour, for instance green
- Make blankets of leaves in order to display how complementary colours affect each other
- Decorate clefts in trees or spaces in-between trees with flowers, leaves etc.
- As a reminder of ancient cult ceremonies: Draw mazes by use of leaves or coloured sawdust

in the snow

- Make nests in the snow with eggs of coloured ice, or with naked branches in nest-like formations against the snow
- The same formation as above, but use coloured snow, fresh berries, fruit or coloured chicken eggs
- Decorate the snow edge with rows of fresh flowers, creating lines between snow forms and e.g. grass forms
- Make use of spaces between stones. Fill them with latticework in contrasting colours
- Stuff cracks in a rock surface with coloured snow/ice/sawdust. Consider whether the rock formations should be covered by coloured leaves pasted on with water/wallpaper paste
- Divide large and small plastic balls in two. Use the halves as moulds for freezing coloured water. Blue suits well in winter, and the frozen casts can become a large blue eyes which can be placed on a snow/ice sculpture, in a cavity in a tree, in the ice on the water etc.
- Freeze coloured water in e.g. 50–100 milk cartons. Use the blocks for building sculptures in nature. Nice effects can be created using e.g. tea candles
- Fill boxes with loose walls with snow, cast snow blocks and place them in a certain relationship to each other or to e.g. boulders or rocks. The snow blocks can be worked with various cutting tools. They can also be added colour
- Place coloured snow blocks between boulders, so that they interact with the natural surroundings
- Mark animal tracks in snow using e.g. natural-coloured or red-coloured sawdust, in order to draw the animal tracks as an organic line
- Lead water running down a rock wall into moulds, so that it freezes into exciting sculptural and spatial forms. Illuminate these with torches

- Find other frozen forms and work them with an axe or spade, and illuminate with torches
- Make use of a location's lines, forms, materials, textures and colours and create nature art in snow or ice, as when Andy Goldsworthy lay large snowballs across a long horizontally growing branch on a large old tree
- Make use of a felled tree lying on the ground. Mark the outline of the tree with two pronounced lines of snow. Fill the space in-between with e.g. frozen lingonberries, rose hips or coloured sawdust! (Colour by immersing sawdust in coloured water. Drain the water and allow the sawdust to dry)
- Use the same type of coloured sawdust and mark animal tracks (from mouse and bird tracks to moose tracks in the snow)
- In terrain with a coastal rock slope: Fill rock crevices with snow or coloured sawdust
- Use a picture of an artwork, e.g. from land art (Andy Goldsworthy, Nils-Udo) or from cubism (Picasso) as inspiration for creating an image in nature where forms in snow, ice and colour are utilized as pictorial elements
- Experiment with contrasts in materials, colours and forms, e.g. frozen ice against skin; frozen blue-coloured eggs of ice in a nest of snow, decorated with frozen rose hips
- Use basic forms like pyramids, spheres and cubes in a three-dimensional artwork in snow and ice, e.g. a snow man made of large, perfect snow spheres (casted in divided basketballs)
- Make different textures in the snow by letting people move around on surface with boots or skis (trodden as in a ski jump), roll over a surface or build up forms in relief, as for instance in freestyle mogul skiing in the Winter Olympics!)
- Use plastic boxes to cast building blocks (loosened from the moulds by laying hot cloths around the boxes). Build with these blocks!
- Cast similar blocks, stack them on top of each other, then saw, cut and carve the snow sculpture!
- Make frost by breathing on glass surfaces out in the cold! Take photographs!
- Break up ice flakes from shallow puddles and make sculptures of them, then photograph them backlit by the sun
- Use icicles of various sizes and plant them as sculpture groups in the snow or in the sand on the beach
- Use a water spray dispenser in order to weld sculptures made of icicles (out in the cold!)

- Create frost by making a fine lattice of natural branches (thin willow) and then spray it with water. Photograph when it is bathed in sunlight
- Make a nest in the snow with eggs of coloured ice
- Take digital photographs of the artworks. Experiment with making aesthetic documentation of processes and end products

The author's nature art CV

I have worked with arts and crafts in general teacher and pre-school teacher training since 1977, first at Hedmark University College, then at Agder University College – now the University of Agder. I was technical advisor and supervisor in arts and crafts for the National Board of Teacher Education under the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs 1986–1990.

- 1984 Telemark University College: Photo exhibition of works of nature art in coastal environments in Southern Norway.
- 1984 Telemark University College: Architecture/room art in naturally grown materials and lashing techniques.
- 1984 Exhibition of the project *Wind, sail and movement* at Kilden Culture Centre in Arendal in collaboration with the kindergarten sector in Arendal Municipality. This project displayed children's exploration and experimenting with wind as phenomenon and wind's effect on various materials.
- 1985 Telemark University College: Exhibition of my dissertation *Wind, sail and movement* in sculptural expressions.
- 1989–2000
Instructor in the didactic development project *The Wind at Lista* in collaboration with Borhaug Kindergarten at Lista in Vest-Agder County, a project dealing with exploration of physical surroundings, children's linguistic expressions and imagery.
- 1992 Organized the exhibition *The Hundred Languages of Children* from Reggio Emilia, which travelled to Arendal, Stavanger, Hamar, Trondheim and Bodø in cooperation with the culture department in Arendal Municipality. The exhibition was opened by Grete Berget, the Norwegian Minister for Children and Family Affairs, and was seen by around 15 000 visitors.
- 1992 Under the auspices of Kristiansand Teacher Training College, I established the Nordic ESJA Network in collaboration with university colleges and universities in the Nordic countries within the fields of teacher training, arts and education. The network aimed to strive for greater emphasis on the relationship between nature, culture and aesthetics.
- 1995 In a project organized by the ESJA Network, 25 participants from five Nordic countries gathered at Snæffellsnes in Iceland to work with land art-inspired activities. The participants committed themselves to use their experiences in their work with young people in their home countries.
- 1995 The exhibition *Earth and environmental art*, held at Lindvedske hus in Arendal: turf blocks (3000 year old plant remains) were used as building material for architecture and playgrounds. Participants were children from Arendal and students from HiA.

- 1997 Organized the ESJA Network's travelling exhibition *To create in and with nature*, funded by the Nordic Culture Fund, based on photographs of Nordic children's and youth's creative activity in nature. Shown at Lindvedske hus/Arendal Art Society, Huset Galleri in Ålborg, Denmark, Vasa Culture Centre in Finland, the University of Gothenburg in Mölndal, Sweden, and in Gerduberg Culture Centre in Reykjavik, Iceland. Artists from another Nordic country than the exhibition country were invited to tie the exhibition up with an art tradition, showing their own artworks at each exhibition venue.
- 1997 *To create in and with nature* was one of the main contributions at a conference regarding arts and crafts in the Curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school in Norway (L97) for teachers in primary and secondary schools and university colleges, held in Arendal 1997.
- 1997 *To create in and with nature* was shown at the international aesthetics network in Gothenburg. The network had gathered 30 participants from the universities of Gothenburg, Salamanca, Vila Real, York and Dublin, and from Hjørring Seminarium in Denmark and Agder University College (HiA). The network made use of the exhibition as a source of inspiration and background material for similar work in nature in Gothenburg and Arendal.
- 1997 Course in nature art and aesthetic documentation for 40 teachers in primary and lower secondary school, under the auspices of Junta de Castilla y León in Palencia in Northern Spain.
- 1997 The article "Land Art en la Escuela", included in a compendium of articles and in a video made by Junta de Castilla y León, Salamanca.
- 1998 The aesthetics network ESJA continued working with nature art in its gathering in 1998 at Hove outside Arendal.
- 1998 Organized the project *Living Room* at Randvika in Risør, in cooperation with the artist Arnfinn Haugen, the artist group Villvin and Risør Municipality, where different student groups were instructed by land artists, including Alfio Bonanno, Arve Rønning and Inge van der Drift.
- 1998 The project *Land art – insects* with a group of Vietnamese and Norwegian children from Vågsbygd School in Kristiansand Municipality.
- 1999 The article "Living Room" published in Barnehegefolk no. 3, 1999, a journal for the kindergarten sector in Norway.
- 1999 The article "Skulpturer som lever" ("Living sculptures") in the Danish journal Uderommet no. 3, 1999.
- 2003 Research grant awarded from Agder University College to conduct research within land art and aesthetic documentation in arts and crafts education.
- 2003 Nature art in the shape of room installations in lattice structures of willow and rowan, Agder University College, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad.
- 2004 Exhibition of photographs from my research within nature art and aesthetic documentation, plus submitting of report, Agder University College, Gimlemoen.
- 2004 and 2005
Snow sculptures at Hovden in Aust-Agder County, commissioned by the tourist office Hovden Ferie
- 2005 Room installation in lattice of live willow, Agder University College and Grimstad Municipality, Dømmesmoen, Grimstad.
- 2005 Supervisor in a project dealing with nature art and aesthetic documentation for 800 eight-class pupils and their art teachers, Kristiansand Municipality, Agder Natural History Museum and Botanical Garden and The Cultural Rucksack – a national programme for art and culture.

- 2005 Responsible for the Faculty of Fine Arts' stand at the Research Fair in Kristiansand. I also participated with my own project for children: *Is it possible to make nature art on a rhubarb leaf?*
- 2005 Interview with the land artist Giuliano Mauri in his home in Lodi, Northern Italy.
- 2005 Artistic supervisor for environmental art decoration at Nidarhall i Froland in Aust-Agder County in connection with the awarding of the Voluntary Work Prize, where Norway's Minister of Culture and Church Affairs, Trond Giske, handed out the prize. Employed by Froland Municipality.
- 2006 The article "Billeddokumentasjon i pedagogisk arbeid" ("Photo documentation in education"), regarding nature art and documentation in cooperation with Assistant Professor Else Cathrine Melhuus, published in the journal Utdanning no 3, 2006
- 2007 Presentation of ice sculptures in Lainio Snow Village i Lapland, under the auspices of the University of Lapland and the Nordic EDDA Network.
- 2008 Land art in Nesna. Courses for kindergarten children, pupils and teachers, organized by Nesna University College, the culture department in Nesna Municipality, the Cultural Rucksack-programme and Nordland County Authority.
- 2008 Environmental art-installation of wood and felt in Nesna harbour, 2008.
- 2008 Live willow hut in Gullbring Kindergarten, Bø in Telemark County.
- 2008 Matted hut ("mound"), as part of a scenography in cooperation with Sidsel Huvestad and Agnes Buen Garnås at Gullbring Culture Centre in Bø in Telemark County.
- 2008 *Nature-Aid* i Homborsund, land art and performance art in lower secondary school, under the auspices of the education centre Eide Oppvekstsenter and the County Governor in Aust-Agder County.
- 2008 Article published in Form no 5, 2008, a journal of art and design, regarding land art and performance art: "Mellom himmel, fot og fjell" ("Between sky, foot and rock").
- 2008 Reportage in the journal Nordnorsk Magasin no 3, 2008: "Naturen som kunstnerisk leikegrind" ("Nature as artistic playpen") by Ann Kristin Klausen.
- 2009 KIA-land art (KIA is a Norwegian christian intercultural association). A three days course for an intercultural group, mainly from Africa at Dømmesmoen in Grimstad.

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