

PREFACE

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This volume offers travel around the circumpolar North and encourages discussion on the role of art in the development of the Arctic. Today, interest in the Arctic is high, and public bodies in the circumpolar Arctic countries and regions within the European Union have developed their Arctic strategies. In these strategies, art and culture are not prioritised, but we –the volume’s authors and editors – recognise that the time is right to have a deeper discussion on Arctic art.

Arctic art is a new concept with many definitions and agendas . It has been widely discussed and defined in the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (ASAD) network in the University of the Arctic (ASAD, 2019; Jokela & Tahkokallio, 2016; Jokela & Coutts, 2018). We use the concept mainly for defining art and design practices that reflect and reform the cultural heritage of the Arctic regions. It includes indigenous and non-indigenous art, as well as their interaction. Arctic art refers to not only contemporary art but also traditional crafts and new art forms, such as snow, ice and light installations. Media art productions depicting Arctic culture are also Arctic art. The concept of Arctic art is politically loaded. It aims to identify the specificities of the arts and the cultures of the Northern regions that promote sustainable development in all its forms. This volume raises four issues of Arctic art for a closer examination.

First, a discussion on how the Arctic is presented in art is needed. As Daniel Chartier (2018) has studied, the North has been imagined and represented for centuries by artists and writers of the Western world, producing partly false or twisted representation of Arctic environment and cultures. More focus has to be paid to the presentation

by the Arctic cultures' insiders. We need to understand the past to be able to see clearly the challenges of the present and create visions for the future.

Second, there is a trap to view Arctic art as comprising indigenous (insiders) or non-indigenous (outsiders) practices only. The megatrends, defined and followed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (2011), quite visibly affect the social life, the well-being and the cultures of the people living in the region and call for collaboration and mutual understanding between indigenous and other cultures in the North. The Arctic communities share several characteristic developmental issues and challenges. The blending of indigenous cultures and other lifestyles of the people in the Arctic is typical in the whole circumpolar area. This multinational and multicultural composition creates sociocultural challenges that are sometimes even politicised in the neo-colonial settings of the North and the Arctic. These are often connected to cultural identities that are constructed, expressed and discussed by means of arts.

Third, institutional interpretations of the role of art, design and craft in Western culture differ from the holistic traditions of Northern and Arctic cultures. Art in Western culture focuses on individual creativity, encouraging alternative and critical ways of perceiving the world. On the contrary, design involves problem solving by meeting people's needs. Thus, sociocultural contexts of art and design differ remarkably. Stakeholders, funding sources and locations of activities also vary from art to design. Art is featured in art museums, galleries, art institutions and cultural events led by artists and curators, while design occurs in industrial organisations and businesses in socio-economic contexts. In Western universities and academies, art and design are taught in the same faculties. Instead, craft is often practised in vocational education. According to an indigenous scholar (Guttorm, 2015), indigenous cultures in the North and the Arctic, such as Sami culture, offer an alternative and more holistic way of thinking about the role of art, design and craft as part of the culture and the eco-social life in the North.

Fourth, innovative art and design development may not be commonly connected to the North and the Arctic. A closer examination brings out several dimensions, which show that the North and the Arctic environments and sociocultural settings can function as laboratories for innovative art and design development research and arenas where context-sensitive methods of art and design can be developed. Such purposes are not only for the North but for the rest of the world that observes the special conditions of peripheral areas and culture-sensitive encounters. According to the research conducted by Nordic Council of Ministers (2011, 2018), the Arctic needs to generate more human capital by investing more in its inhabitants. The advent of what is often characterised as the 'knowledge economy' needs the enhancement of human skills and talents, which will be the key to the next development process. Art and creative capacity is needed, especially among the young generation. Higher educational institutions of art and design are the key players in the future of the Arctic.

Arctic art as the frame of this volume reflects a variety of disciplines, cultural contexts and research approaches of the authors. As editors, we respect the paradigms of the authors' academic disciplines, as well as the traditions in their countries and regions where their research has been conducted. In bringing together this rich collection, we

hope that we have remained true to the authentic voice and perspective of each author and that the readers will appreciate the diverse ways that research is conducted in art and cultural studies across the circumpolar North.

In the opening article, *Indigenous Cultures, Local Lifestyles? 'Culture' in the Northern Strategies of the Eight Arctic States*, Hanna Lempinen explores the themes of culture and sustainability through the lens of social science by analysing Arctic strategies of the eight Arctic Council member states, namely Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and the United States. She claims that the state-level Arctic strategies of the council's member states do not prioritise culture and the related issues to any meaningful extent. The strategies most commonly refer to art and culture in the context of the indigenous peoples. She notes that cultural events are presented in the strategies as ways to bring competitive economic advantage and keep the Northern communities and regions of the Arctic states inhabited. The rare references to cultures of non-indigenous local residents, who comprise the vast majority of the inhabitants of the circumpolar North, do not state these cultures as important to sustain.

In the second article, *Early Artists in the Euro-Arctic Region: Arctic Culture and Nature as a Motif in Art from the 1870s to the 1930s*, art historian Tuija Hautala-Hirvioja studies the artistic portrayal of the Arctic and the North. She explains and analyses how artists depicted the way of life and nature in the Euro-Arctic region from the 1870s to the 1930s and focuses on the paintings by four pioneer fine artists who had a close relationship with nature. Hautala-Hirvioja introduces the art works of these almost unknown artists who decided to settle down in the remote North. The artist themselves wished to increase knowledge of the Arctic nature and the cultures of Sámi and Nenets for a variety of reasons, such as being inspired by orientalism and opposing colonialism.

In the third article, *A Context-Sensitive Approach to the Use of Traditional Ornaments in Contemporary Design Practice*, we travel to North Russia with design researchers Ramilya Minnakhmetova, Svetlana Usenyuk-Kravchuk and Yulia Konkova. They examine the unique aesthetic value and power of traditional ornaments of the Arctic natives and challenge the assumption about ornaments as mere decorations. They argue that ornaments have cultural significance in ethnic communities, and transforming traditions calls for sensitivity. By analysing ornamental objects resulting from modern design/architectural practice, the authors raise issues related to intercultural encounters between non-indigenous designers and local/indigenous systems of communication and identity in the context of a modern Northern city. Ornamental borrowings often appear arbitrary while following some formalistic attributes, rooting them in the local ethnicity. The result is the loss of the ornaments' sacral semantic aspect and the violation of cultural norms and values. Minnakhmetova, Usenyuk-Kravchuk and Konkova highlight the need for moral and ethical principles of design activities, transforming traditional heritage and local visual communication.

Tourism is one of the largest industries in Lapland, Finland, and nature is the most important reason for people to travel there. In the fourth article, *Environmental Art for Tourism in the Arctic*, Maria Huhmarniemi and Timo Jokela, who are experts in art education and applied visual arts, examine the potential of environmental art for

sustainable tourism in the Arctic. Tourism keeps the peripheries inhabited and provides jobs for people who wish to work in nature. The cooperation between the tourism industry and the creative sector is expected to grow. The authors state that artists could extend their expertise in craftsmanship to the design of art concepts, the integrated art of architecture, community art, the design of art-based services and art consultation to create work opportunities for artists in the Arctic region. They also explain how a tourism company can be an art collector, an artist's residence or the host of an art event or commission artworks and employ artists to service design teams. These operating methods influence place specificities of art, which is a potential quality factor of art on tourism sites. Place-specific artwork can represent the local cultural heritage. Huhmarniemi and Jokela call for sustainable retention and reform of the cultures of the Arctic region through art.

In the fifth article, *Pile o'Sápmi and the Connections between Art and Politics*, Hanna Horsberg Hansen analyses the artwork *Pile o'Sápmi* by the Sámi artist Máret Ánne Sara from multiple perspectives. First, she follows the artwork as a political statement connected to the legal case and indigenous rights. Another perspective involves local and international art discourses emphasising the role of *Pile o' Sápmi* at the exhibition Documenta 14 in Kassel 2017. The artwork has gained wide national and international recognition and highlighted the potential of contemporary art as an intervention approach to political discussion.

The final three contributions in this volume are visual essays. It is a formidable task to present a complex study in a short essay that uses image and text interdependently to create meaning. The idea of the visual essay is to allow artist-researchers more flexibility and creativity to report findings than in the text-based research article. After all, we are mainly dealing with visual issues when discussing Arctic art. We hope that the readers will enjoy the rich illustration and visual language of these essays.

In the first visual essay, *Changes: Icelandic Artists Reflect on Climate Changes*, researcher-curator Ásthildur Jónsdóttir discusses artworks that reflect on changes and natural elements. Earth's climate system is very complex, and each of its elements is changing constantly. Most of these changes are not immediately noticeable on a global scale, but over time, patterns emerge, and we say that the climate is changing. Visual artists have the potential to point out issues often hidden in our society. Sometimes, their perspectives can help us discover our role in the natural world and in society, making it possible for us to connect different events and perceive them and ourselves in context, as part of a whole. Jónsdóttir argues how sustainability is becoming an issue where artistic involvement and creative approaches could be crucial in creating the much needed awareness of our place in the world and in the context of our existence and behaviour.

In the second visual essay, *Storytelling and Interchanges: Sewing Art from Siberian Yupik on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska*, art educator Herminia Din presents a personal journey with Alaskan natives Ruthelle, Elaine Kingeekuk and Lydia Apatiki about their sewing, art, culture, creativity and way of living – contemporary yet traditional. St. Lawrence Island is located west of mainland Alaska in the Bering Sea. The island is part

of Alaska but closer to the Chukchi Peninsula in the Russian Far East. It is inhabited mostly by Siberian Yupik engaged in hunting, fishing and reindeer herding. The visual essay is a documentation of stories of several sewing objects, as well as Din's personal experiences and exchanges of a friendship with two native families. The stories are presented in English and Siberian Yupik. A significant contribution of this project is its bilingual layout for sharing stories because many cultural elements are rooted in the local language, which cannot be fully translated into another language.

In the third visual essay, *Needle, Bead, and Voice: Learning about Yukon First Nations' Traditional Sewing from Mrs. Annie Smith and Ms. Dianne Smith*, Nicole Bauberger and Amanda Graham take us to Canada. This visual essay outlines and illustrates a research project undertaken in Whitehorse, Yukon with Mrs. Annie Smith, a then 89-year-old Kwanlin Dun First Nation elder and sewing teacher, and Ms. Dianne Smith, her daughter, also an elder and a sewing teacher. It explores the rationale behind the project and outlines the methodologies created to undertake the project effectively and ethically, including obtaining advice from others in the community, providing the elders with information ahead of time so that they can think about it before recording, and a rigorous vetting process.

The discussion on Arctic art is considered an ambitious endeavour, inspired by the understanding of the role of art and culture as vital for the well-being of the Arctic people, as well as the whole society. The aim of increasing collaboration among circum-polar scholars is connected to cultural and educational policies, through which new ways of linking art with other sectors of society can be established. Although art and culture have recently received attention, mainly due to their economic potentials, as creative industries and services, art- and culture-related activities are not just about economic enterprise. While searching for new ideas and concepts, art always shakes and breaks rules – it criticises, challenges and proposes alternative ways of creating and knowing. In finding new kinds of opportunities, art has the potential to be influential in society for making Arctic lives better and Arctic communities stronger. Art creates meanings, symbols and values that are not measurable in numbers. We need to make sure that Arctic art, design and craft retains its ability to transform and renew itself continuously.

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