



*Elina Härkönen*

**etsin, kohtasin, havahduin  
sought, met, awoke**

Väitöskirjan taiteellinen osio, Lapin yliopisto  
Galleria Kellokas 7.11.–31.12.2020

*yhdessä/with*

Tanya Kravtsov  
Maria Huhmarniemi  
Lotta Lundstedt  
Lidia Kostareva  
Miia Mäkinen  
Jari Rinne  
Annamari Manninen

Marja Ylioinas  
Salla-Mari Koistinen  
Eira Virtanen  
Tuula Vanhatapio  
Anniina Koivurova  
Leena Koski



# Artistic part

Sought, met, awoke

*The poster for the artistic part exhibition at the Gallery Kellokas, Kolari, Finland. Design: Elina Härkönen*

# Etsin, kohtasin, havahduin Sought, met, awoke

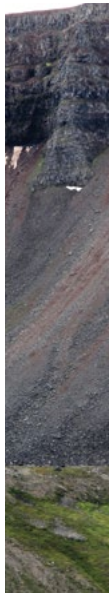
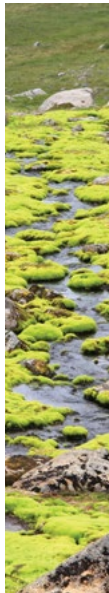
Artistic part of the doctoral thesis  
Elina Härkönen

It is my third year working as a lecturer in Art Education at the University of Lapland. My thesis is strongly linked to my work, as my topic is the challenges and opportunities of the internationalising higher art education from the perspective of cultural sustainability. Cultural sustainability and sustainable development in general are part of UNESCO's declarations for education intended to be implemented by the year 2030. Cultural diversity and equal education are also part of the field of art education (see UNESCO, 2015; 2017; Jokela & Coutts, 2018; Wagner, E. 2019; Wagner & Veloso, 2019; Wagner, E. 2019; Kim, 2019). My research will be addressing three courses that I taught with my home and international colleagues in Finland, Norway and Russia and in which cultural diversity was present in one way or another. The shared and living, northern/Arctic cultural heritage and its examination through contemporary art have been a cross-cutting theme in the courses I have taught. The informants and co-researchers in my study are Finnish and international degree and exchange students from our University and these courses in question, and as my method, I used art-based action research. My goal is to develop the international teaching activities in universities and in my own work as a lecturer. My role in the study is multi-layered: I am both a researcher and actor, and as an actor, I am a teacher, artist, participant and learner.

I have compiled the artistic part of my thesis into an exhibition called *Etsin, kohtasin, havahduin/ Sought, met, awoke* for the Kellokas Gallery in Kolari. The exhibition is on display from 7 November until 30 December 2020. The exhibition consists of both my own and collaborative pieces, based on the themes of my thesis process. The collaborative pieces I have made with my colleagues who are also working in the field of higher art and craft education in the Nordic countries and Russia. The exhibition is a collection and a summary, for the artistic part of my thesis that took place during the research. In these processes, I have delved into some shared reflections on the expressions of the northern cultural heritage at the interfaces of traditional handicrafts and contemporary art.

Also, other artworks were created during the research process, but for my exhibition, I chose only the ones that, in one way or another, touch on the reflections of cultural heritage and handicrafts, and that are mainly made out of woollen yarn. This is partially due to the fact that I experience my own Tornio Valley cultural

background and heritage as something that materialises to the cross-generational tradition of knitting and weaving and the gift of making with hands. The location in the Tornio Valley area was also relevant in the choice of the gallery. My wish is to look at the ensemble in the regional context and to receive possibly new reflections to the works through the exhibition guests.



Woollen sceneries  
5 x lapaset / mittens  
30 x 120 cm (2016)  
islantilainen villalanka /  
Icelandic wool

I see that adding collaborative artworks in the exhibition alongside my own is essential. I have become aware that, particularly through the processes of making together, it is easier to reach also tacit knowledge related to theme through discussions and artistic outcomes. In a bigger picture, the exhibition reflects on the encounters that I have had during the courses I teach and during my participation to the different international academic activities relating to north. During these encounters, it has been natural to examine the shared as well as unfamiliar parts of our cultural heritage. In situations where they have met, and sometimes collided, it has been easier to become aware of my own values, beliefs and position, and therefore more sensitive to cultural layers and diversity. This is one of the essential aims of the development of culturally sustainable activities (see Dessein, Soini, Fairclough & Horlings, 2015; Auclair & Fairclough, 2015).

## About the research methods

Due to the viewpoints mentioned above, I consider the whole process of my artistic part and the exhibition itself to be a method of perceiving my conception of knowledge, in which I have observed the relationship that I, as the researcher and research participant, have with the topic being studied.

I have participated in the activities of the international Art-Based Education Research (ABER) network as a doctoral thesis researcher. The goal of the network is to make visible and develop art-based education research. ABER is based on collecting practice-based information. Art is not seen as a subordinate, exotic part of the research, but the creative process is a core element of information production in education research practices (see Adams 2019; Sinner, Irwin & Adams, 2019; Sinner, Irwin & Jokela, 2018). Through the network, I took part in the week-long Tate Exchange art event at the TATE Liverpool art museum where the network's doctoral thesis researchers displayed their participatory artworks that had been made based on their studies. This forms one of the research cases of my thesis. The knitting circle performance, done in collaboration with Maria Huhmarniemi and Annamari Manninen, I examined the shared cultural heritage related to knitting. Museum visitors all around the world took part in the performance, and we gained a fairly comprehensive understanding of the universality of knitting. Whilst knitting, every participant shared their personal memories related to the craft (see Härkönen, E. 2020)

The primary method of my study, Art-Based Action Research (ABAR), is also based on participatory action, shared understanding, and collaborative development of the activity. The method has its basis on cyclical research processes which include the defining of the aims and tasks of the research, planning, theoretical background research, and an art-based activity. The activity is observed reflectively and by conceptualising, and the actions necessary for the development of the activity are identified (Jokela, Hiltunen & Härkönen, 2015).

I consider the art processes of my study valuable also for their mere artistic qualities, outside their instrumental dimension. Getting lost in the rhythm of the handcrafting, feeling the texture of the material in my fingers, and mentally picturing the finished piece all remain as memories in my body and open up new perspectives for the themes that are examined in my study.

## Specific context for the study and the description of the artistic activity

Art has had a central role in every study module in my research, and every activity has finished with an art exhibition. At these exhibitions, I have worked primarily as a curator. I have decided to leave these exhibitions out of my artistic part and examine them as an essential part of the artistic processes of the study modules. I have described these processes in the following research articles used in my doctoral thesis:

1. Härkönen, E. (2018) Teach Me Your Arctic: Place-Based Intercultural Approaches in Art Education. *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*
2. Härkönen, E. (2019) Art Interventions as Community Art The dilemma of continuity in the case of the Enontekiö Art Path. *Synnyt/Origins: Finnish Studies in Art Education*
3. Härkönen, E., Huhmarniemi, M. & Jokela, T. (2018) Crafting Sustainability: Handcraft in Contemporary Art and Cultural Sustainability in the Finnish Lapland. *Sustainability*
4. Härkönen, E. & Stöckell, A. (2019) Cultural Sustainability in Art-Based Interdisciplinary Dialogue. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*.
5. Härkönen, E. (estimated publication date 2020) Heritage as a verb. in T. Jokela & G. Coutts (ed.) *Relate North: Tradition and Innovation in Art & Design Education*. Viseu: Insea Publications.

In the second research case (the first being the Tate Exchange), we held a pilot course called *Our Arctic* with the students of the University of Lapland, Iceland University of the Arts, and Nord University of Norway. The objective of the course was to gather together views that the pupils from Finland and Norway held about living in the Arctic. The art workshops gave the children information about the important cultural heritage of the place, and this was exhibited as a video installation at the international Arctic Spirit Conference in the autumn 2017. (Härkönen, 2018).

The third case was a longer-term project in which we carried out community art workshops in the different villages of the municipality of Enontekiö together with the University of Lapland's international Master's students of Arctic Art and

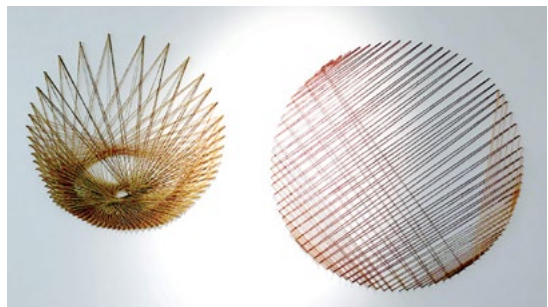
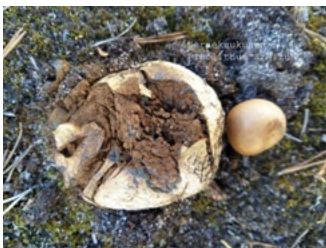


The old, new, borrowed and blue with Tanya Kravtsov  
 Installation / Installaatio 120 x 114 cm, (2018)

Design (AAD). This project called Enontekiö art path, (2016-2018) attempted to improve the accessibility of art in the more remote locations and emphasise the uniqueness and cultural characteristics of these places. The themes for the environmental artworks, executed with the residents of the villages, stemmed from the history and lifestyles of the villages and the natural materials characteristic of them. In total, artworks were made for five villages, and inhabitants from school pupils to the elders of the village participated in their creation. In addition to the finished artworks (some of which were vanishing art), the processes were documented in a booklet and an art exhibition at the nature centre located in Hetta, Enontekiö, at the end of the project. (Härkönen, 2019).

The third teaching module that I studied was an international summer school that was held in collaboration with the circumpolar Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (ASAD) network in Komi, Russia, in the summer 2018. The Living in the Landscape summer school was an interdisciplinary, research-based unit that observed the sociocultural landscape of Komi from the perspectives of science and art. The research material collected during the summer school was gathered together into artworks and, in the autumn, an exhibition for the Syktyvkar State University's gallery. A central element in the artworks was the cultural heritage of the region and its visitors, expressed through landscape. I attended the summer school as a post-graduate student. (Härkönen & Stöckell, 2019)

In each of these research cases, the artistic process was lead by a dialogue about the dimensions of cultural heritage in the activities of the culturally diverse groups, and the artworks created during the modules are expressions of the multi-layered, vital, regional cultural heritages.



Nature Color Theory  
with Maria Huhmarniemi  
Installaatio / Installation,  
vaihteleva koko / various sizes (2018)



## About my roles within the framework of cultural sustainability

Cultural sustainability is based on basic principles which consider the role of culture essential in the implementation of sustainable development. Based on the article by Katriina Soini (2013), I have outlined those principles of cultural sustainability which are the most essential for the scientific and artistic parts of my doctoral thesis as follows: 1. Active participation of the local people in the regional development activities (the bottom-up approach), 2. Assessment of the need for change in people's ways of acting (culture) in order to achieve permanent environmental solutions, 3. Since regional cultures have undergone quick and drastic changes due to globalisation, it is necessary to identify those cultural elements that should be sustained, 4. Due to globalisation, intercultural encounters have increased the need for identifying and understanding one's own culture and different cultures, and for observing cultural identity and the dimensions of belonging to a place, time and community.

In a way, number 1 has been the primary basis for my entire study, as we have been working with communities and school groups previously unfamiliar to us. The starting point of each artistic activity has been the cultural heritage, stories, histories, materials and places of each particular group. These have also been part of my artwork processes in the artistic part of my thesis, particularly in the artworks *Something old, new, borrowed and blue* and *Woollen Sceneries*. These pieces are about my reflections and dialogue regarding the visitor's gaze, interpretations, and the need to express gratitude for the hospitality and warm welcome one has received.

Number 2 has been relevant to us, as we have had to make topical and material choices during the research cases. Old traditions and beliefs and the knowledge about natural materials were part of the Enontekiö art path's workshops in particular. Through my personal reflections, this extended into those artworks of mine that are made with natural dyes. The idea is not only to use natural materials instead of synthetic dyes, but also to expand one's knowledge about nature and thus grow one's respect for it, re-learning traditional methods and taking them forward. Plants are strongly regional, some being regional to the northern hemisphere specifically, and life has been, and still is, tied to the surrounding nature. There exists an underlying reciprocity, both between humans and nature, and between generations and different cultures. (see Kimmerer, 2013; Shubert & Joubert, 2016; Härkönen, Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020; Guttorm, 2015)

Number 3 and 4 are strongly related in my artistic processes and my research cases. We acted locally, yet our group is still culturally diverse. Compared to my international students, I am a local, since my roots are deep in the history of a small village in Central Finnish Lapland. However, I am a visitor in the Lappish communities of my study, even if I speak the same dialect or understand the lo-



The knitting circle at the TATE Liverpool  
with Maria Huhmarniemi & Annamari Manninen  
Documentary triptych / triptyykki  
3x 40x40cm (2018)

cal mentality. When it comes to the foreign communities of my study, I am in the same situation with my students, since the fact that I am a visitor is clearer to me as well. In Komi, Russia, I was a foreigner who could not speak the language and was completely reliant on the interpreters when trying to get to know the locals. I have also noticed that, in my roles as a researcher and “university person”, I am initially more of a stranger than I would be otherwise, and getting to know others takes longer. Examining the concepts of being a local or an outsider has been a firm part of the creation process of the artworks in my artistic part.

As a researcher, community artist and/or instructor whose objective is cultural sustainability, it is essential to consider one’s own role in relation to the community being studied or taking part in the activity. Smith (1999), Fairclough et al.

(2014), Trulsson & Burnard (2016), among others, call for responsible reflection by researchers and agents on their own prejudices, positions of power, and ways of knowing. Trulsson & Burnard (2016) remark that whether the researcher comes from within the community or outside of it does not necessarily decide the success of the activity or the reliability of its results. The positions of both options have both positive and negative dimensions in relation to the participating community. Those who come from within the community, who have, for example, a similar cultural background with the community being studied, are able to understand the context and behavioural patterns on a deeper level, but can simultaneously be blind to, for example, the power dynamics within the structures. On the other hand, outsiders, who are often accused of not being able to understand the culture or the factors underlying the discourse, can benefit from their position by having the ability to observe things objectively (Trulsson & Burnard, 2016).



Shared Woollen Patterns with Maria Huhmarniemi, Miia Mäkinen & Jari Rinne  
Installaatio/ Installation (2019)  
3 knitted ponchos, audio

## About cultural heritage

My understanding of cultural heritage is based primarily on the Council of Europe Framework Convention, called the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) and the definitions by the Australian professor of archaeology, Laurajane Smith. Faro defines cultural heritage as a shared and valuable resource and highlights its diversity (Council of Europe, 2005). The convention is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which cultural rights include the right to cultural heritage. According to the convention, preserving and valuing cultural heritage is positively linked to the quality of everyday life (The Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017.)

Smith (2006) sees cultural heritage as a living part of everyday life. She emphasises that cultural heritage is an active negotiation about the giving of meaning, collective memories and parts of the past in the present. She includes the concepts of identity, power, remembrance, location and way of being as part of cultural heritage (Smith, 2006).

The dimensions of cultural heritage in the artworks of my artistic part meet in the handcrafts and in the consideration of places as social, cultural and natural landscapes. In addition, the artworks touch cultural symbols, particularly through knitting patterns. Whilst attempting to conceptualise my cultural heritage, considering the concept of belonging has been an underlying theme in the artistic part of my thesis. Who I am in relation to others and these places that I consider home. Where do I belong and where do I have the right to belong? What does the responsibility of my belonging include?

## About the art

I consider the process and dialog essential in art. The philosophy of making things by hand (Kojonkoski-Rännäli, 2014) is a central determiner of my artistic understanding. The practicality and the principles of material and technique originate from crafts (Fitzpatrick & Reilly, 2019; Lippard, 2010; Kojonkoski-Rännäli, 2014), whilst the corporeality, performativity and unpredictability in my work are dimensions characteristic of contemporary art (Sederholm, 2002; Hiltunen 2012). The dialogic, space-, site- and time-specificity, and communality of contemporary art are important elements of my artistic understanding (Lacy, 1994; Kester 2004; Kantonen, 2005). They are also a central part of today's understanding of cultural heritage.

With my artistic activities, I am also interested in participating in the creation of a new definition for Arctic art which our department of Art Education and the circumpolar ASAD Network have been working on for the past ten years (see Jokela, Huhmarniemi & Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019). Arctic art refers to contemporary art,

crafts and design which address Arctic themes and sustainability in the Arctic, and reflect on and reform the regional cultural heritage by creating new ways of expression based on the Arctic nature, culture and other current topics. It is an alternative way of seeing the connections between art, crafts and design, and the way they are naturally tied to people's everyday lives (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020).

Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty identified corporeality as part of the way humans exist in the world. Merleau-Ponty (1989) describes how, through sensations and feelings, humans form a broader connection to the world around them. In addition to seeing, touching is part of perception. In its essence, the world is tangible (Merleau-Ponty, 1989).

The recent new materialistic perspective is nothing new in art, but it helps me in structuring and putting into words my own understanding of art. In neo-materialism, anthropocentrism steps aside, and the equal agency between the matter and the agent becomes central. New materialism defends the activeness of the substance/matter; it is not seen as something passive waiting for the agent (which, in this case, is a human) to give it a form of some kind, but it is reciprocal and able to resist (Rosiek, 2017). In art, the texture of the material, corporeality of the creator, and the senses have prominence. My claim is that this happens in everything we do, but the Western, dualistic view of the mind and body as separate entities still affects our thinking so strongly that it is not easy for us to notice it.

New materialism is present particularly strongly in the natural dyeing process. I have gradually begun to understand that controlling the dyeing process does not work and mostly causes me annoyance. If I leave the process, the water, yarn, dyes and weather, to work their magic without my control, the journey is pleasant and full of surprises. These factors together decide the result each time. I am an observer, starter of the activity and, above all, a learner.

Working with others and dialogue in the making of my artistic part have made processual learning and realisation clearer. The name of the exhibition itself is a reference to this: Sought, met, awoke, I thought about the structure of my artistic part for a long time, and initially, I found an exhibition too narrow a way to present all the processes I had gone through during the journey. For years, I felt stuck with my artistic activities, and the doctoral research restarted those activities rather quickly. I thought that, even if art was not going to be a visible part of my thesis, it would still have a central part in the development of my understanding and conceptualisation of my experiences. After all, these were the result of all the encounters where art had been created together. The themes began to form during the research cases and their artistic processes. They continued to refine when I met with my artist colleagues who are now part of my exhibition, and also had an effect on my own, personal artworks. Eventually, several artworks had been finished, and the longing for bringing them together began to grow. Most of the pieces had appeared in other group exhibitions, but only separately. I wanted to compile the artworks into an exhibition to see if, together, they would form a clearer picture of this jour-



Älä mene vielä / Please don't leave yet  
villakudos / woollen tapestry  
150 x 57 cm, (2020)

ney. I wondered if it would be ethical to compile this exhibition under my name, as many other people had been involved in creating the pieces. After I received a permission for each artwork to include it in the exhibition, I felt that they had formed a coherent whole. Individually created artworks would not give the exhibition that dialogicality of cultural heritage that is central to the collaborative pieces. I consider my exhibition a research study, and my artist colleagues played their part in the production of the results. The whole has been brought together by me and is part of my doctoral thesis, but, in essence, it is an exhibition of collaborative work. I am grateful to those important people who have been part of this journey for making this exhibition possible and, above all, for expanding my understanding.

## Conclusion

The world has gone through many kinds of unrest during my doctoral thesis process. In many ways, this unrest has been related to the topic of my research and, inevitably, finding my own perspective has been difficult. I began working on my research in 2016 during the aftermath of the European refugee crisis. During the past four years, the climate crisis has deepened and criticism regarding the insufficiency of the measures taken to promote sustainable development has increased. In the spring 2020, COVID-19 radically transformed the world on many levels, and simultaneously, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement highlighted the continuous global issue of inequality and the existence of neocolonialism. In small communities on social media, the limits of cultural appropriation in design, as well as manifestations of racism, for example, in knitting communities on social media, have caused discussion. Due to the algorithms and the choices of the individuals, those belonging to different minority groups have had more difficulty in gaining visibility for their work compared to, for example, those designers who are white.

I consider bringing up these issues important, as they expose the structural issues of the Western society and increase awareness. It surely does not hurt anyone to examine one's own status and actions in the light of these themes. Whilst working on the artworks, I spent a great amount of time thinking about these issues from the perspective of my status and privilege. Social media, however, has polarised the discussion, and the lack of dialogue has bothered me. It also had an effect on the creation of the artworks, as the highly critical examination of myself and my roles, at its most extreme, caused me to consider giving up the work entirely. Eventually, I have found a peace of mind and that actively taking action is necessary. I have begun to trust in what I have learned through my research process and in the valuable conversations opened up by the artistic activities. I have learned that genuine efforts towards dialogue, cultural exchange and learning from others build more bridges than withdrawal and quitting all activity. Both sides of the activity, however, are required to be interested, respectful and willing in order for the dialogue to be successful and equal.

Meeting in Material with Lotta Lundstedt & Lidia Kostareva  
Quilt, 90 x 180 cm (2020)

Plant and mushroom dyed fabrics (cotton, linen, silk, wool, lace, hemp)  
Plants and mushrooms (oak bark, tansy, tutsan, onion peel, red onion peel, birch leaves, rosehip, maple, chamomille, spruce cone, lady's mantle, heather, spruce, rhubarb, madder, blackwood, cortinarius and dyeball (pisolithus arhizus))





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