

The driftwood sailboat

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At the beginning of the Lila 24 project, I had to ask myself: “What connects this year’s themes of “river” and “green energy”?” The answer to the question was obvious to me: “Hydropower!”

Using hydropower as a guideline I started investing my time into the project. I brought it with me in all aspects of the project and I found it easy to work with. It was something concrete.

I live in a small town with about 50 other people. A small river runs through the town. The amount of water that runs through the river is controlled by a hydropower station further up the mountains. This is why I chose to use hydropower as part of my final production. However, my way of thinking was challenged during the project. That led to a change in what my final production was going to look like, and more importantly: what it was going to express.

During the fieldwork week in Rovaniemi and Vuotso I was recommended by Elina Härkönen to use “the driftwood sailboat”, which I made for another task, for my final production. I decided to hold on to the driftwood sailboat, but I did not know exactly how I would connect it to the themes or what



Figure 1. Image: Parpala, 2024

I was going to do with it. I also did not know how I would combine it with hydropower.

After I returned from the fieldwork week, I had to start over and ask myself the same question I did in the beginning: “What connects this year’s themes of “river” and “green energy”?” I also had to ask myself in what ways I could use the sailboat in my expression. This time the answer was not hydropower,



Figure 2. Image: Dale, 2024

and it was no longer obvious to me. I spent about two months dwelling on the question, and how I could connect it to discussions we have had in the project.

The basis

Tim Ingold's (1993) concept of the temporality of the landscape has been a foundational inspiration

for this project. In his article, *The Temporality of the Landscape* (1993), Ingold discusses how landscapes are experienced and shaped through time and human interaction. He argues that landscapes are not static but are continuously created through natural processes and human activities (Ingold, 1993). This perspective is particularly relevant to the use of driftwood in my artwork. The driftwood, shaped by water and the passage of time, embodies a history of change and adaptation. Ingold's understanding of landscapes as temporal and dynamic is the basis for my project.



Figure 3. Image: Dale, 2024

Ingold (1993) describes rivers as actively involved in the shaping and re-shaping of the land over time: rivers are presented as a living process that carve the landscape. In other words, rivers are always changing. The famous saying of Heraclitus (as cited in Kahn, 1979), that you cannot step in the same river twice, aligns with Ingold's description: the sense that everything is constantly changing.

During the fieldwork week Timo Jokela, professor and artist at the University of Lapland, presented to us on how his life, and work, was and is affected by dwelling by the river landscape. He talked about the different possibilities a river landscape offers people, that includes transportation, work, school, food, and energy from the 1950s until today. In Norwegian riverscape the possibilities were the same.

Description

The driftwood - with its natural and irregular form - symbolises the river's power and its ability to shape the landscape. By using materials influenced by both natural and human-made forces, the project emphasizes the relationship between nature and technology, and how these can coexist and impact each other. This material choice also reflects themes of sustainability and reuse, which are critical aspects of contemporary art practices (Rosenthal, 2003).

Additionally, yet significantly, my project incorporates traditional textile techniques, specifically crochet, in creating the sail. Crochet, as a technique, has deep roots in cultural and craft traditions in Norway. In 1974 the use of thread in Norwegian schools became mandatory also for boys (Haabesland & Vavik, 2016). By employing crochet, the project highlights how traditional crafts can be revitalised and contextualised within contemporary art. The green-blue yarn of the sail not only represents the river but also symbolises human creativity, craft, and adaptability. The use of yarn and crochet serves as a contrast to the hard materials around it.



Figures 4 & 5. Images: Dale, 2024

The crochet technique was chosen to reflect the interwoven nature of human interaction with the environment. In creating the sail, it was important to maintain a balance between the natural and the human-made, which is evident in the texture and colour choices of the sail. The green and blue tones symbolise not just the river's flow but also the vegetation and life that the river supports. This underscores how art can represent complex ecological systems and their aesthetic qualities.

The figure at the bow of the boat, pointing forward, symbolises humanity's future and hope. This element serves as a reminder of the connectedness between humans and nature, and that our future well-being depends on how we manage our natural resources. The figure's forward gaze suggests a direction for future development that is sustainable and harmonious with nature.

Living in the landscape

The artwork integrates artistic practices with cultural concepts, functioning as an exploration of the themes of river and green energy. In art theory, rivers are often seen as symbols of movement, change, and the passage of time (Berleant, 1997). These symbols can also be related to scientific understandings of hydroelectric power, demonstrating how rivers function as dynamic systems that shape and influence landscapes over time. The artwork visualizes this duality by using driftwood as a metaphor for the river's power and energy.

The project also incorporates cultural and traditional elements with craft techniques like crochet. This links cultural heritage with modern art practices, showing how traditional crafts can be adapted

and revitalized to reflect contemporary themes such as sustainability and environmental conservation (Adamson, 2007). The historical context of crochet provides a deeper understanding of how human craftsmanship can be used to create a meaningful dialogue with nature.



Figures 6. Images: Dale, 2024

Conclusion

The 2024 Lila intertwines the themes of river and green energy. My production of this project is a sailboat constructed from driftwood collected from a hydroelectric reservoir. The sail, crafted from green-blue yarn, and a clay figure positioned at the bow of the boat, symbolically pointing forward, are central elements. This artwork is intended to be displayed suspended from the ceiling, reflecting natural elements and human creativity.

The project represents a complex intertwining of art, nature, technology, and tradition. Through its material choices and techniques, it highlights the relationship between rivers, green energy, and human creativity. By using Ingold's theory of landscape temporality and exploring traditional textile techniques, the artwork creates a bridge between the past, present, and future. The piece serves as a symbol of hope and sustainability, inviting viewers to reflect on their own relationship with nature and how they can contribute to a more sustainable future. By combining artistic expression with history and cultural understanding, the project invites inspiration and reflection.

Through this project, I've gained a clearer understanding of how my mind works. I've learned to move from a concrete way of thinking to a more abstract perspective. Green energy is no longer just about hydropower, and a river is more than just a river. I've come to realize that art, for me, is a personal experience that I share by bringing my ideas to life. And in doing so, I don't need to overcomplicate things—keeping it simple allows the expression to speak for itself.

References

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