

Introduction:

A Journey with New Genre Arctic Art

Timo Jokela¹, Annamari Manninen¹ and Peter Berliner²

¹University of Lapland, Finland and ²Association Siunissaq, Greenland

We met; we shared ideas. We drove together on long, grey tarmac roads through white landscapes of snow. We gathered in lecture halls and opened the windows to let the Arctic light stream. We traversed deep snow at the foot of the Quassussuaq mountain; we curated exhibitions, conversed and laughed together—artists, researchers, educators and youth—all united in a spirit of creativity. Together, we ran along the frozen river in Karasjok, twilight casting a magical glow as we celebrated the river, the sky and our unity and our shared visions in the fading light of the day and the soft coming of the Arctic night. We revelled in the act of creation, shaping our northern world collectively and using art as our beacon for a sustainable future.

This book is a testament to that journey, a chronicle for all who wish to join us in this shared endeavour, continually unveiling new and wondrous ways to engage art in building

a sustainable present and future in the Arctic. Whether you are an artist, a citizen, an educator, a herder in the forest, a parent, a hunter on the trail, a tourist group guide, a child sketching in the margins of a schoolbook, an environmental activist, a social worker, a public health advocate or any other contributor to our shared Arctic life, you will find ideas and inspiration within these pages. That is our hope. We extend our hand to you, wishing you joy in this exploration.

We are pleased to share the outcomes of the two-year (2022–2024) development project – New Genre Arctic Art Education (AAE) – with you. The project involved collaboration among the Arctic University’s Thematic Networks – Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD) and Children in the Arctic – and it was organised in collaboration with four universities: University of Lapland, Finland; Nord University, Norway; Umeå University, Sweden; and Ilisimatusarfik – University of Greenland. For reasons unrelated to the project, the Association Siunissaq

replaced the University of Greenland as the Greenlandic partner. The project was funded by the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, represented by the University of the Arctic (UArctic). The present project was the initial phase of a larger collaborative effort by the mentioned thematic networks of the UArctic (Jokela & Hiltunen, 2024).

For both UArctic thematic networks, the values of UArctic were central to the project, promoting northern voices and a circumpolar perspective. The AAE initiative embraced cultural diversity, linguistic plurality and gender equality, supporting peaceful coexistence and collaboration with equal civil and social rights. It fostered respectful, trust-based partnerships and valued the insights and knowledge of the northern Indigenous peoples. The project championed participatory knowledge production, including Indigenous methodologies and ethics, ensuring an open dialogue with all stakeholders. By reducing barriers to cooperation across borders, cultures and academic systems, the network upheld transparency and openness. It created accessible, research-based knowledge to support sustainable development in the Arctic.

The AAE project aimed to create and maintain long-term transdisciplinary partnerships between Arctic universities in fields such as education, art, design, craft, humanities, nature and social sciences. The objective was to address the emerging challenges brought about by changes in the Arctic. These challenges were driven by megatrends, such as urbanisation, globalisation and the consequences of climate and environmental changes, which significantly impacted the social and cultural lives of local communities. The effects of these changes

on children and youth in the Arctic, both in Indigenous and multi-ethnic communities, have become increasingly visible.

The concept of ‘new genre Arctic art’ was developed by ASAD researchers (Jokela et al., 2021). It builds on Lacy’s (1995) concept of ‘new genre public art’, which emphasises participatory, political and aesthetic artworks, activities and events. New genre Arctic art combines activism and engagement with current issues in the Arctic, such as resource extraction, climate change, social and mental challenges, and the rights of Indigenous peoples. A turn in contemporary art education contributes to this new genre of art and highlights how artists present the Arctic through participatory, socially engaged practices. Thus, art educators play a crucial role in ecoculture and in decolonisation through art-based ways of strengthening our endeavours to build a sustainable present and future in the Arctic (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022).

The convergence of critical Arctic sustainability studies with this new genre Arctic art has led to a fundamental notion: sustainable art education must incorporate and respect local cultures and Indigenous and Northern knowledge. This approach to art education is forward-looking, imagining a future in which art education plays a critical role in shaping sustainable communities in the Arctic. The AAE initiative consists of several funded sub-projects that explore how art and design education can address local ecocultures issues, identities and social structures.

In the UArctic Network: Children in the Arctic, Siunissaq has likewise implemented a series of projects combining community art and psychosocial activities in communities in the

Arctic. The collaboration of the two networks leads to continuous networking on art and sustainability through an art-based building community and an overarching culture of co-operation, trust and mutual respect between the diverse cultures in the Arctic.

This project was planned to foster decolonisation, social resilience and sustainability through art-based local involvements and educational practices. Supported by art-based action research, we have demonstrated how artists and art educators can work together with communities to revitalise cultures and decolonise discourses and practices through self-determined social and cultural identities that open pathways to sustainable futures in the North and Arctic regions.

We have broadened the understanding of living in the Arctic sociocultural landscapes by utilising transdisciplinary and culturally diverse approaches and by including culturally and linguistically diverse communities, students and staff. Collaboration among participants in seminars and workshops was central to the project's values. To reduce barriers such as linguistic, cultural and participatory challenges, a hybrid implementation was used, ensuring openness and accessibility for students from diverse backgrounds and fields of study.

The activities designed for this project aimed to promote respect, cultural sensitivity and social sustainability in the Arctic region. This involved consulting and engaging with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous local communities in the development of activities and knowledge construction. By bringing together various stakeholders to share the best practices and knowledge of art education, the project

aimed to better promote sustainability in the Arctic region. The impact of these seminars and workshops was enhanced through interdisciplinary collaboration, which enabled a deeper understanding and visualisation of the many facets of Arctic life.

The five chapters and 24 visual essays of this book clarify the richness of the AAE. This publication is divided into three parts. In the first part, the authors shed light on the bases of the project. Timo Jokela and Mirja Hiltunen structure the main conceptual and practical steps of AAE based on a review of new genre arctic art and art education activities. Peter Berliner and Elena de Casas draw the connections between art-based activities, psychosocial well-being and the ecocultural approach to sustainability. They also present a closer view of the cultural, environmental and social contexts in Greenland and community art's and activities' potential to decolonise values and knowledge building. Sara Rylander and Lotta Lundstedt discuss the concept of ecocultural resilience in art and handicraft education by examining the example of the university course Sloyd, Design and Sustainable Development, in which crafts connect tradition with today and include social, cultural and ecological aspects. Karin Stoll, Wenche Sørmo and Mette Gårdvik offer some insight into a multidisciplinary approach for sustainability education by defining the roles of artistic activities in art and natural science integration. In the first section's last chapter, Annamari Manninen opens the concept of hybrid teaching that aims for situational and dialogical learning that forms the ground for collaboration in Arctic art education.

The second part of the book consists of several visual essays that present snapshots of what

was done during the project period and how artists, art educators, researchers and students have, through their contributions, applied and developed AAE. These visual essays highlight different mediums and methods of contemporary art, including digital possibilities for creating AAE individually, in collaboration with others or in community settings.

Timo Jokela and Peter Berliner shed light on the first steps of the AAE project's art-based activities in Nuuk, Greenland, where the project's first phase was initiated in the spring of 2023. Mirja Hiltunen, in turn, illustrates with two contemporary artworks how she approached new situations, places and communities in Greenland.

The second AAE project development pilot, a hybrid course and field school, was organised at Karasjok in the spring of 2024 in the Sámi region of Norway, where the key local partners were the Sámi Centre for Contemporary Art (Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš) and the Karasjok School. In his visual essay, Timo Jokela explains how the course and field school were built and implemented based on AAE principles. Then, Ante Jalvela and Emilia Tuononen present an example of art-based work during the online part of the course. The next four essays – Emilia Tuononen and Silja Peltola about painting, Dylan Stiegemeier and Sara Rylander about clay, Lotta Lundstedt about craft and Korinna Korsström-Magga about reindeer antler carving – delve deeper into the implementation of the field school and intra-actions with Karasjok ecoculture and visualise the art education carried out, conveying the experiences of the various activities and outcomes.

In addition to the AAE pilot field schools in Nuuk and Karasjok, where all universities par-

ticipated together, each university developed its own AAE activities based on its specific disciplines and regional contexts. The visual essays by Mirja Hiltunen, Karin Stoll, Wenche Sørmo, Mette Gårdvik, Peter Berliner, Elena de Casas, Antti Stöckell and Timo Jokela provide a glimpse into the diverse regions of Utsjoki in Finland, Kautokeino, Nesna and Bodö in Norway, as well as Nuuk and Maniitsoq in Greenland, illustrating how AAE practices were forged in collaboration and intra-action with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, considering the potential of northern ecocultures.

As editors, we have included in this publication examples from "AAE's sister projects" coordinated by the ASAD network and the University of Lapland, since these cases adequately illustrate AAE thinking. Emmi Kairenius and Saara Lappeteläinen give us views on the Living in the Landscape (LiLa) projects that run a multidisciplinary summer school on art-bases landscape research methodologies in collaboration with universities. Gina Wall and Timo Jokela's essay is also related to UArctic collaboration. They present how art education at the University of Lapland and architecture education at the Glasgow School of Art collaborated on a course consisting of distance learning, co-design and a field school. Within this framework, an architectural work combining traditional temporary shelters, the Finnish 'laavu' and the Scottish 'sheiling-bouch' was constructed in Scotland in the spirit of AAE.

Aki Lintumäki, in turn, inspires young people to create event-based and publicly displayed art to promote the expression of young people's voices and emotions in climate change-related discussions.

Maria Huhmarniemi and her colleagues Lola Cervantes, Minna Kovero, Tanya Kravtsov and Elina Luiro present art activities from projects focusing on the revitalisation of wool use and handicrafts. One article deals with the tradition of the large-scale felting of raw wool, while another article focuses on revitalised traditional Nordic wool embroidery through the lens of craftivism.

In her third article, Maria Huhmarniemi collaborates closely with forest restoration efforts, raising questions about environmental ethics, cultural sustainability and the role of humans in nature. The project also facilitates art workshops for school pupils, further enhancing its educational aspect.

We have included two essays from Scotland, a near-Arctic region, in our publication. Roxane Permar presents a mobile film project implemented in an urban environment, which served as a new way for care-experienced young people in Shetland to creatively engage with each other. Siun Garden examines the utility of an individual social artist mapping their ‘landscape of practice’, proposing this exercise as a beneficial activity for individuals working in new genre Arctic art and as a tool for mapping routes towards new collaborations and ways of working.

As editors, we appreciate the UArctic network partners who have, over the years, contributed to raising awareness and rethinking art education in the Arctic region. Herminia Din’s visual essay offers a window into how she has, over the years, innovated steps in art education towards Arctic sustainability activities in her work.

In the third part, the authors summarise the results of the AAE project. The project was

monitored, reflected upon and evaluated during the process using art-based action research methods. The core results and learning outcomes are presented in this publication to support their implementation and integration into the curricula of participating universities as well as joint education of UArctic.

The AAE initiative proved to be a profound means of artfully articulating emotions and perceptions regarding the current situation, challenges, strengths and transformations in the living Arctic. It served as a model for fostering socially and culturally sustainable communities, connecting diverse groups and ensuring that everyone in the Arctic has freedom of expression, democratic participation and access to art and culture.

The project has been a wondrous journey for all of us. A journey of creating art together and, through that, artfully creating a supportive, inspiring and joyful collaboration. It has been, and will continue to be, an experience of applying art to convey a profound understanding of our shared life in the Arctic and to join in building an overarching and embracing Arctic culture of environmental and social justice, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence. We have experienced that in every moment of the project – and we hope that this book transmits that sensation to you and to everyone who reads it. ●

**Timo Jokela, Annamari Manninen
and Peter Berliner**

In Rovaniemi and Nuuk, 24 October 2024

References

- Jokela, T., & Hiltunen, M. (2024). New genre Arctic art education as a way of knowing with the North. In T. Jokela, M. Huhmarniemi, & K. Burnett (Eds.), *Relate north: New genre Arctic art education beyond borders* (pp. 12–37). InSEA Publications. <https://doi.org/10.24981/2024-RNNGAEB>
- Jokela, T., & Huhmarniemi, M. (2022). Arctic art education in changing nature and culture. *Education in the North*, 29(2), 4–27. <https://doi.org/10.26203/55f2-1c04>
- Jokela, T., Huhmarniemi, M., Beer, R., & Soloviova, A. (2021). Mapping new genre Arctic art. In L. Heininen, H. Exner-Pirot, & J. Barnes (Eds.), *Arctic yearbook 2021: Defining and mapping sovereignties, policies and perceptions*. Arctic Portal. <https://arcticyearbook.com/arctic-yearbook/2021/2021-scholarly-papers/400-mapping-new-genre-arctic-art>
- Lacy, S. (Ed.). (1995). *Mapping the terrain. New genre public art*. Bay Press