




# Project Design for New Genre Arctic Art and Art Education

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**T**his chapter will guide you on a journey of creating art together with Land and people and, through that, fostering supportive, inspiring and joyful Arctic collaborations for living in harmony with the Land and people. We hope these guidelines will support you in planning and carrying out sustainable and inspiring new genre AAE projects. The plan also justifies the relevance and significance of your project. The aim is to ensure that all participants and collaborators understand the project's goals and ways of working and that they share a common vision and language when discussing the intentions and plans of the project.

The project plan, prepared at the outset of the process, consolidates all the essential elements of the project, including its intentions, purposes and working methods. The plan also justifies the relevance and significance of the project.

A solid foundation for project planning includes familiarisation with the location, Land, involved communities, community leaders and knowledge-holders and, where necessary, the relevant stakeholders and socio-cultural realities of the region. When international teams design AAE projects, it is common for the mapping of knowledge to be based on various types of publications, including maps, books and museum exhibits. Whenever possible and appropriate, the planning phase includes visits to key locations and meetings with community partners. These interactions, often carried out by the project partner living in the region closest to the local community, provide opportunities for dialogue, helping to clarify wishes, needs and shared objectives.

It is essential to remember that in Arctic contexts, communities – predominantly Indigenous or local communities – are not only stakeholders but also the holders of unique knowledge systems. These systems may guide the project's ethical, methodological and creative directions. Respect for local leadership and self-determination is a foundational principle of all AAE projects.

A good understanding of the project's thematic content requires a multidisciplinary approach. This process is similar to research, where prior studies, existing projects and theoretical frameworks provide insight and guidance. The project team



Figures: Snow sculpting. Photographs: Antti Stöckell, 2024.

shares these learning tasks, agreeing on intermediate deadlines for presenting and gathering findings. Often, the planning phase accounts for up to one-third of the total project workload.

Well-planned and contextually appropriate artistic and educational activity is at the heart of an AAE project, enabling site-specific, situational and phenomenon-based learning.

The project plan should outline the team's views on learning and art – for example, in terms of equality, inclusion, accessibility and decolonisation – as well as outlining ecological, social and cultural sustainability. The plan also needs to reflect sensitivity towards the Arctic context, including the seasonal rhythms, ecological constraints, Indigenous and Northern knowledge systems and the lived realities of local communities. Recognising the ongoing impacts of colonial histories and extractive industries in the Arctic is essential for ensuring that the project avoids cultural appropriation and promotes ethical collaboration.

#### **THE PROJECT TITLE**

The title should clearly and concisely capture the nature and idea of the project, making it easy to refer to in communication. If necessary, an acronym or abbreviation may also be created.

#### **WHA IS THE MAIN IDEA AND PURPOSE?**

Summarise the project's main idea and purpose: what will be done, with whom, when and where?

#### **WHERE?**

Describe the location(s) where the project will take place. Justify the choice of location, considering its opportunities and potential challenges. Will the project – or parts of it – be conducted online or remotely?

Consider using public spaces and natural surroundings as learning environments. In the North and the Arctic, the Land itself is an essential part of cultural identity and learning. AAE can take place in natural settings – such as forests, riverbanks, coastal areas, tundra and mountains – where participants can learn traditional ways of life and cultural practices through first-hand experience alongside art-based environmental studies. Community centres, cultural festivals

and other public events can also serve as dynamic learning spaces that blend traditional and contemporary art and knowledge, reinforcing a sense of place and belonging.

### THE TEAM

List the members of the project team and outline possible areas of responsibility. For example, responsibilities for documentation or communications may be assigned to specific team members.

### WITH WHOM?

Identify the organisations and individuals involved in the project and describe their roles. Name experts, supporters or funders and clarify their contributions and interests. It is essential to clearly outline the goals, expectations and motivations of all partners.

AAE activities should involve Elders, artists, craft makers, cultural leaders and local organisations to ensure that the lessons learned reflect community values and addresses significant issues, such as climate change, land rights and cultural preservation. Preliminary knowledge of Northern ecoculture and material traditions should be ensured in collaboration with knowledge holders. This approach fosters active citizenship, strengthens cultural identity and facilitates the transfer of knowledge between generations, ultimately supporting a sustainability transformation.

### THE SCHEDULE

Plan and outline the timeline: when does the project start and end, and what are the intermediate milestones by which certain sub-goals should be achieved?

### WHY?

Justify the project's relevance from both community, environmental and Arctic perspectives. Explain why this project is meaningful for the development of AAE, Arctic sustainability and your personal and professional growth. The rationale should address a specific challenge that the project responds to or a vision of the new possibilities it opens up. Consider how the project acknowledges and supports the cultural sovereignty of Arctic peoples and communities

and how it contributes to the decolonisation of knowledge, practices and representations.

It is essential to integrate social and cultural considerations into AAE activities. The North and the Arctic face social, environmental and cultural challenges, including the impacts of climate change, cultural erosion and the exploitation of natural resources. Therefore, AAE should address the urgent issues related to local and Indigenous rights, cultural diversity and sustainability. Addressing these topics can foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of life in the Arctic while raising awareness of social justice and environmental issues.

### GOALS

Define a central goal: what kind of impact does the project aim to achieve? This may involve revitalising cultural heritage, animating ecocultural traditions, empowering communities and making public artworks. Goals might also include supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer, honouring storytelling traditions or fostering respectful relationships with the Land. If you work with people, consider the community's visions for their future, not just the project team's assumptions. You may also set sub-goals related to knowledge, skills, attitudes and social learning. Generating discussion and public awareness may also be one of the aims. Goals should be realistic and concrete. If the AAE project is carried out at school, the curriculum may guide goal setting; in community projects, goals should be shaped through dialogue with the community.

It is important to involve local stakeholders, Indigenous representatives, cultural representatives and Elders in both the planning and implementation phases of AAE. This ensures that the AAE aligns with the community's cultural values, ecocultural traditions, needs and customs. It is crucial to prioritise co-design in which the community actively participates in shaping the AAE project plan and objectives, leading to a more authentic and meaningful experience for all participants.

### MEANS AND WORKING PRACTICES

Describe the practical methods to be used: what will be done, and how? Careful planning of the methods, working practices and content increases flexibility in practice.

In Arctic projects, the methods may also need to be adjusted to local seasonal conditions (e.g. light, weather, migration patterns) and cultural protocols (e.g. times for community gatherings or ceremonies). Participatory and co-creative approaches are often recommended to ensure that the community's voice shapes not only the outcomes but also the process itself. In larger projects, the methods may be organised into so-called work packages to break the project into manageable parts.

AAE combines traditional Northern knowledge and material culture with contemporary art practices. The practice may include traditional art forms – such as carving, weaving and storytelling – as entry points to explore cultural values and ecocultural traditions. Local artists and craftspeople can be engaged as part-time instructors, enabling students to learn directly from community-based knowledge holders. This approach supports cultural preservation and revitalisation while recognising local expertise. Outdoor activities, place-specific art and collaborative projects with local residents are central, encouraging direct engagement with the Land, water, plants, animals and seasonal rhythms through art-based methods. Digital tools and online activities can be applied to AAE projects.

### THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Briefly describe the key theories related to art and learning that inform the project and introduce the relevant concepts. Justify the project idea and working methods by referencing previous Arctic art projects and relevant research in AAE. Read more about the theoretical background below.

### THE PLAN FOR EXPLORING THE PLACE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

A variety of methods can be employed to explore the chosen location and its ecocultural context, including multisensory observation, site-specific artistic activities, interviews and digital tools. In the framework of AAE projects, the notion of *community* is understood broadly, encompassing human inhabitants and more-than-human beings, environments and material agencies. Read more about this phase below.

### THE EXPECTED RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Evaluate the potential results and impacts of the project as an extension of its goals. Consider why this project is important. In art education, especially in rural Arctic communities, outcomes are often more qualitative than quantitative. Reflect on the anticipated effects on participants, the local community and the environment. The project's impact may extend beyond its immediate scope, influencing future activities or perceptions of Arctic art and AAE.

### COMMUNICATION

Communication is central to increasing the accessibility and impact of the project's actions and outcomes. A communication plan outlines guidelines for both external communications and internal interaction, including outlining the principles for creating a safer space. The team should agree on communication practices, such as channels and meeting schedules. Some communication targets local communities and stakeholders, while other communication addresses broader audiences via media platforms. Specify who should communicate what, to whom and when. Use appropriate tools and media. Read more on communication in the guidelines below.

### BUDGET AND FUNDING PLAN

Outline the project's anticipated costs and available resources. List the facilities, equipment and tools available to you.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Reflect on the sustainability dimensions of the project. Does the project contribute to sustainability transformations, and does it have an impact on social or cultural sustainability? Is the project carried out sustainably, limiting the ecological footprint and avoiding harm to nature?

### PROJECT ETHICS AND GIVING CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Ethics in art and art education projects are closely tied to the project's goals, methods and relationships. Ethical practice encompasses how artists or educators plan and execute their work, engage with participants and acknowledge authorship. This includes reflecting on power dynamics, inclusion and responsibilities in both privileged and marginalised contexts. In AAE projects, it is essential

to clarify roles and consent. If a project is intended to be evaluated and presented in a research context, ethical practice includes defining the anonymity and role of participants. This is especially important when working with vulnerable individuals, who must be offered anonymity if they wish. From the beginning, participants should be informed about whether they are involved as named artists, credited contributors or anonymous participants.

When working with Northern and Arctic (often multicultural and/or Indigenous) communities, it is always important to respect cultural protocols and sensitivities. It is essential to respect local customs, cultural protocols and the significance of any potential sacred sites or practices. It is crucial to ensure that artistic activities are culturally appropriate and do not distort or exploit Indigenous traditions. Ethically, it is also important to ensure that all documentation (e.g. photos, videos and artworks) is done with permission and used respectfully.

#### A SAFER SPACE

AAE practices should foster inclusive and safe environments where participants can express personal experiences, emotions and social concerns through artistic means. These projects can be viewed as performative situations that invite diverse forms of participation and facilitate dialogue aimed at healing and strengthening community resilience. While sustainability is a global concern, art-based engagement with these issues can also promote individual mental well-being by offering meaningful channels for self-expression and social reflection. This is particularly relevant in Arctic communities where art can play a significant role in addressing mental health challenges – often linked to the impacts of colonial histories – and in supporting emotional and cultural recovery.

#### DOCUMENTATION PLAN

Who is responsible for documentation? What will be documented, how and for what purpose? Confirm if there is consent for photography, video and potential research use. Formal agreements may be necessary if materials are to be published. Think about the kind of materials to produce: will there be a publication, an exhibition, an online presentation or social media content? This will guide what is recorded and when. Read more about photo and video documentation below.

Figure: Timo Jokela,  
*Journey of Kuer*, 2018.  
Wood sculpture.  
Photograph: Santeri  
Happonen, 2018.



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