

# Introduction

*Glen Coutts, Elina Härkönen and Timo Jokela*

The main aim of this publication is to explain and illustrate practice in contemporary art and design as it has been developed in one innovative degree programme of art and design and how the disciplines relate to the far northern European and Arctic context. It is called a handbook because it simply provides information and facts, illustrating the type of products, interventions or services that students develop in partnership with local people and companies. The book is not primarily intended to be an academic or theoretical publication, rather its purpose is to reflect on the first few years of the a new degree and explain the background to some of the projects that have been completed to date.

The book was produced as part of the *Arctic Arts and Design* (AAD) masters' programme funded by the European Social Fund and the Center of Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. The degree was designed, developed and implemented by the staff of the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland. AAD is new degree programme that responds to the challenges posed by the changing socio-cultural and economic circumstances in the north of Europe and Arctic. Students who successfully complete the degree are multi-skilled, creative practitioners who can operate in a wide range of situations from small-scale local and community settings to, for example, companies that provide goods and services to the tourist industries in Lapland and beyond. In addition to high level training in art and design, students must demonstrate the ability to work effectively as part of a multi-disciplinary team.

The boundaries between science and art are deliberately blurred in AAD and students are encouraged to exploit the areas of overlap between and potential benefits of, working with and across disciplines. Students may work in, for example, engineering, tourism, public, social and healthcare contexts. As an integral part of their study, each student must undertake an intensive period of work experience, a challenging 'real life' venture in collaboration with a local community, company or both. The student contributions in the second section of this book offer an insight to just a few of those collaborative experiences.

Graduates from the programme can serve as visual designers, creative entrepreneurs or consultants in a variety of situations, for example as developers of adventure and cultural environments, art-based services. Alternatively, they may be initiators or organisers of creative elements in social and health care contexts.

The book is organised in two sections, the first section consists of chapters that discuss some of the background thinking while introducing examples of projects in Lapland and beyond that use similar

methods. The second section, entitled 'vignettes', consists of short essays or reports by some of our students. Richly illustrated, that section provides the reader with a good overview of the type of work our students are capable of.

Section one, opens with a chapter by Timo Jokela and Maria Huhmarniemi that reports on the concept of *Art-Based Action Research* (ABAR). The authors teach the research element of the degree and give an explanation of ABAR and how the concept is used by to produce, analyse, document and reflect on experience. The results of the students' experiential learning and ABAR is reported through the masters' thesis.

The second chapter, by Elina Härkönen and Hanna-Riina Vuontisjärvi offers an overview of the Project Studies component of the degree programme. In the essay, the authors emphasise the blended nature of learning, drawing on the strengths of both service design and applied visual arts, with cultural sustainability at 'the core of their thinking'.

In the following chapter Glen Coutts explores the connections between art, people and place. He provides two examples to illustrate some of the ways that artists collaborate with other disciplines, specifically engineers and social scientists. In each of the examples the location, or place, was central to the art work that was developed by the artists and their interdisciplinary teams.

Mari Suoheimo and Melanie Sarantou focus on service design in the fourth chapter. Learning through practical service design methods together with the concepts of co-creation and peer to peer learning. As an example, the authors discuss a project with social workers that aimed to improve the work prospects of unemployed men.

The concluding chapter in the first section, also focusing on design, describing participatory design methods, was written by a graduate of AAD, Salla-Mari Koistinen. The author outlines the design process as it is used in a participatory context using key operational phases; finding, sharing, creating and implementing.

The second section of the book, entitled 'vignettes' is a collection of short essays, heavily illustrated, that demonstrate the breadth of activity that students engage in as part of the intensive two-year programme. Kravstov, Douranou, Corin, Hiilivirta, Huang, Walroos and Ikeuchi report on projects ranging from using design thinking in waste management, to designing an art trail with residents of a small northern village to community integration with asylum seekers using arts-based methods.

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Antti Stöckell, *Playing with snow and ice*, 2018, details of a series of installations.