

The bridge: Ten towers, ten stories

Tanya Kravtsov

“The bridge: Ten towers – ten stories” is an environmental art project, which was developed as a part of YMA – Ympäristötaidetta matkailun alueille (Environmental Art for Tourism), a collaborative project between the University of Lapland’s Faculty of Art and Design, the Artist’s Association of Lapland, and four Lapland tourism enterprises and organizations. The main focus of the YMA project is to increase the use of environmental art in nature tourism destinations and in development of tourist services, producing high-quality nature tourism environments. (YMA project plan 2014-2020)

The participants of the project were from various backgrounds, which created a fruitful team work with creative ideas and interesting discussions. Three team members were involved in the development of “The bridge: Ten towers – ten stories” project: an artist Tuuli Seppälä, a master student of Art Education Paula Sepponen, and me – a master student in Arctic Art and Design. Project’s supervisors from the University of Lapland were: Timo Jokela - professor of art education, Christa Haataja – project manager in YMA project, Elina Härkönen – supervisor of the “Project Management” course in Arctic Art and Design Master Program (AAD). We had meetings once in two weeks to share visual and reading materials, discuss and plan next steps. We also had a possibility to visit the place of the planned project three times during the year. We experienced the atmosphere in different seasons, collected visual materials and met the owner Päivikki Palosaari, who gave us information regarding the concept of the place, future plans and visions.

“The bridge: Ten towers – ten stories” project took place in experience village Tonttula - Elves Hideaway, which is located in Königs village, at the river bank of Ounasjoki, eight km from Levi Center, Lapland. Surrounded by gloomy forest, the place offers the visitors to experience Lappish culture and nature. The attractions and activities are based on stories, fantasy, culture and mythology of Lapland.

The aim of the project was to develop a concept for a walking bridge constructed of ten towers, leading the customers from the second floor of the Restaurant Tonttula to the magical forest, where the customers will walk through a tunnel, to the most secret place of elves, the hidden huts. Each tower of the bridge tells a story about local traditions, natural materials, and handicrafts. We aimed to create multi-sensuous experiences with learning elements, which connected to local culture and brings an additional aesthetic, cultural and

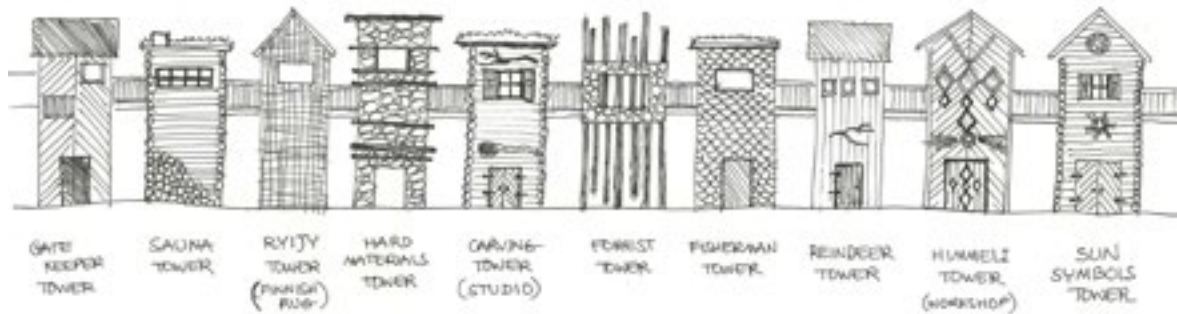


Figure 1. Sketch of the ten towers. Tanya Kravtsov, 2018.

commercial values to the place. The design of the concept was based on literature and visual research and aimed to harmonize with the environment in both conceptual and visual levels, connecting past and present.

After collecting visual inspirations and making a research about the place, local traditions, and natural materials, we planned ten themes for the towers: gate keeper, sauna, soft materials (Finnish rug – ryijy), hard materials (stones and metal), carving, forest, fishing and hunting, reindeer, himmeli, and sun symbols. (figure 1) The bridge is constructed of two levels: ground level with a space for a storage or a craftsman studio, and the upper level – the main walking path through the towers. The tasks were divided between the team members, my part in the project was to plan and design four towers of ten: himmeli, carving, forest, and sauna.

The sauna tower represents the concept of Finnish sauna as a symbol of a national identity. “For us the sauna is much more than a place for washing, however; it is the home of very many of our traditional customs and beliefs.” (Eronen, 2007, p.20) The forest tower represents the importance of the forest for Finnish people in both spiritual and physical levels. “Finnish life in the old days meant living in communion with the forest. The forest was the Finn’s world; it was there that he cleaned the land to farm and caught game, and from it he took the raw material for his buildings and implements...The forest was also a sphere for imagination, peopled by the creatures of fairytale, fable, myth and superstitions.” (Pallasmaa, 1987, p.16) The carving tower tells a story about wood and traditional handicraft – carving; representing the technique, carving tools and wooden objects of everyday use, giving the possibility to observe the craftsman working in his studio downstairs. (figure 2) Since ancient times, possessing the skills of wood work was important for Finnish man, because “the whole life was wood: buildings and means of transport, tools and traps, furniture and children’s toys.” (Pallasmaa, 1987, p.16) The Himmeli tower represents the traditional Finnish decoration made of straw. The tower has two spaces: the upper space shows the history of Himmeli, raw material and other objects made of straw in a traditional way; the downstairs space can be used as a studio, where the visitors can participate in



Figure 2. Sketches and scale model of the carving tower and some elements of inside decoration. Tanya Kravtsov, 2018.



Figure 3. Sinco prototyping. Image: Elina Härkönen, 2018.

a workshop and learn to make the basic shape of Himmeli, experience the atmosphere and purchase a set of materials. Since the project was dealing with creating a new attraction for visitors, user-centred approach has been kept in mind and applied in the designing process. As an example, the prototyping workshop of himmeli tower concept in SINCO laboratory gave new perspectives and added valuable data for the project. (figure 3) SINCO is a prototyping laboratory, equipped with technology-aided tools and interactive environment for participatory experience prototyping, located in the Faculty of Art and Design in the University of Lapland.

In the project we aimed to create new experiences with learning elements, which connected to local culture and nature, bringing an additional aesthetic and commercial values to the place. The result of the project is a plan, with visualized ideas (sketches and scale models) and written description, which can be realized in the future. The whole project was a learning experience, which included place-based research, visualization, working in a team with different stakeholders, and development of the project using design cycling process of work. The project is an example of collaborative work between Art and Design field and the industry of Tourism, which is beneficial for both fields, providing a great platform for innovative, and creative ideas.

REFERENCES

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