

SNOW ENGAGEMENT - Snow-Sculpting Workshop with the School Children from Raanujärvi

Valerie Wahlroos

COOPERATIVE WORK

My name is Valerie Wahlroos and I am a Master student in the Programme Arctic Art and Design at the University of Lapland. With the help of two Art Education students, Verna Penttilä and Josefiina Jokiahho, I planned, developed and realised the project „Snow Engagement“. Supervisor Elina Härkönen, University teacher Antti Stöckell and Antti-Jussi Yliharju supported and helped me with my ideas but main and important collaboration partner has been the Raanujärvi School and the 15 great school children who were participating in the project.

IMPORTANT CONTENTS

The snow sculpting workshop overall was developed for the school children to experience a fun, exciting and especially instructive time with snow as a material. The three-day workshop started with a little insight into Raanujärvis' early hunting livelihood with the topic of hunted animals in the past, continued with two days of intensive snow sculpting and ended with a celebration event in the evening. The „Snow Engagement“ project combined history knowledge, teamwork, decision making, handicraft, working with natural materials, promotion, creativity, logical thinking and three dimensional understanding.

When developing the workshop idea, focus point has also been, possible ways of how to approach and get the rest of the Raanujärvi community interested in a further project concerning the previous mentioned hunting history.

VENUE

Raanujärvi belongs to the municipality of Ylitornio and is situated about 60km northwest from Rovaniemi, it is an old village where its past inhabitants were Forrest Sámi who lived from fishing, forestry, berry picking and reindeer hunting and husbandry. The history of this area can be still seen and experienced at several hunting pit locations which led to the topic of hunted animals for the sculpting. The Raanujärvi school is very small with only 15 pupils from the age of 6 to 12.



Figure 1. The snow sculpting workshop started with sketching and small scale modeling the sculptures. The sculpting lasted two days and was finalised by a snow sculpting exhibition. Images: Valerie Wahlroos, 2017.



Figure 2. Images: Valerie Wahroos, 2017.

PROJECT NEEDS

The school children of Raanujärvi being artists, not audience who learn and enjoy art through experience, a community getting closer to their own identity, creating feelings of inclusion, belonging, pride and happiness where the key theories for my project idea.

When planning to involve the villagers in a further project, I would like to get them motivated in working together on a topic that regards and should interest everyone. Ancient hunting and herding places had been the contemporary herders' past, are still their present and will be their future. To get more attention from the majority of the community, starting point was, to give the children an insight to their early livelihood which concentrated on their past local hunting culture.

END RESULT

There have been three major points, that lead to the success of the „Snow Engagement“ project. A great collaboration among the project team, committed and enthusiastic participants as well as a simple and flexible project plan and timetable. Raanujärvi school, our cooperation partner, surprised us with unique and talented participants. The children have shown great group working attitude, motivation, and creativity which in the end could be seen at the celebration evening on the last day of the project. They astonished us all with six fantastic animal sculptures, a full furnished sauna and two snow graffiti walls.

What I learned from the project was that it is important to offer our children more often the environment, time and possibility to be creative and they will astonish us with a richness of ideas and create a whole new world.

During the snow sculpting exhibition, I also had the feeling of being understood, heard and known by the villagers. People have been speaking to me about the project but also about their knowledge of the hunting history. This made me realise how important it is to approach an unknown community slowly without pressure or commitment to gain their trust and attention. All in all, a good start to continue my future project with hopefully many participants from Raanujärvi.