

SCULPTING SNOW IN LAINIO

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The basic elements of Finnish winter, ice and snow, are quantitatively almost unlimited as art making material. When making a snow sculpture in a bigger magnitude, one has to pay regard to a various number of circumstances for example the strength of snow bulk, the placing of the artwork and its intention.

The snow sculpture we made to the Lainios snow village was carved from a block of snow which was three meters(9,84 feet) long, wide and high. It was in the same time a piece of art and a slide. Children would enjoy our work because it's fun to play with, and grown ups would get pleasure from its aesthetic values. In the following text we're going to explore numerous work phases which conclude in snow sculpting.



Photo: Jaakko Moilanen

Lainio Snow Village

Lainio is located in western part of Finnish Lapland. It is a small village between two famous ski resorts- Ylläs and Levi. Snow village lies about 150 km north of Lapland capital Rovaniemi and the Arctic Circle and is situated in wilderness. It offers peace and solitude to people that visit it. It opens its gates every year on the first of December. Inside you can have a drink in the largest ice bar in whole Europe, spend a night in the hotel or marvel sculpture art all around the area. Temperature inside stays between 0 °C and -5 °C no matter what temperature outside is. There tourists can enjoy the nature and winter of Lapland. You can go to snow mobile safaris on your own or in small groups. There are also husky rides or reindeer rides available.

Construction of the hotel begins when the temperature drops about ten degrees below zero, which is usually in October or November. This year it was pretty close that hotel didn't get ready in time because there wasn't cold enough. Constructors are developing new tools and instruments for snow construction and they are exploring innovative ways of taking this art form into new levels.

Some of the sculptures are made by students of University of Lapland. This year there are large lynxes and bear serving as slides and

two smaller snow sculptures guarding the gate outside. In snow bar you can find reindeer and wolf reliefs and there are also reindeer sculptures in the gallery made by students.

Planning

Planning is critical in snow sculpting. When making a large scaled work one has to know exactly where to break off a block and in which angle to do it. Work phases have to be in knowledge, since the entirety is hard to perceive because big proportions. Making dimension sketches and using plasticine models are easy ways to make correct and precise plans. When plans are clear, working is fluent. The qualities of snow should be considered during the planning. Too small features won't stand out from white and light reflecting surface. Forms vital to the structure should be clear and simple.

We started planning our sculpture by collecting information about lynxes' anatomy and characteristic poses. We made preliminary sketches, but we didn't end up in any specific pose. However we all agreed that prying would be a suitable feline position.

Not until in Lainio we managed to finish our sketches after seeing the location and proportions of the snow cube. In situ we also heard that there should be a slide affiliated to

the sculpture. The slide would split the cube in halves and on top of the cube would the lynxes lurk for one another. We decided to set the lynxes in diagonal so that they would look more dramatic and bigger. We made precise dimension sketches but during the work phase we noticed how inadequate they were. To our surprise few of the sketches were drawn in reflection and the lynxes were turned wrongly. That unexpected twist slowed down the working pace, but we got it fixed. Not until correcting the errors, the importance or good planning point out to be true.

Sculpting snow sculpture and finishing off it

Before we started to sculpt the size of 27 cubic metres snow cube we sketched measures that divide the sculpture to the drawings we had made and also to the snow cube itself. By sketching the same measures in bigger scale we made sure that the snow sculpture would be identical with our plans in spite of its bigger size.



Photo: Jaakko Moilanen

We started to sculpt the snow with taking of the unnecessary, big pieces of snow using the electronic saw and the snow saw. We however left some extra allowance for sculpting so that the possible mistakes would have been easier to avoid and fix. To sculpt the snow we used mainly tools meant just for the snow sculpting. For example different sizes chopping knives were good. When fastening the ear of one the lynxes to its head we used wet snow as a glue. That fastening technique can be used if the original snow isn't enough for sculpting all the pieces of the snow sculpture but some pieces have to be sculpted from other snow. The pieces that will be fastened to the original snow mass can be sculpted either before or after the fastening process, or both.

When the snow sculpture was almost ready and there wasn't anything to sculpt anymore, we removed to the finishing part of our work. The finishing touches were put with grating the surface of the snow sculpture with special grater meant just for the snow sculpting. The appearance of the snow

sculpture was improved later with grating the shapes of the sculpture more angular.

Social Aspects of Community-Based Winter Art

Communities' social activity can be improved and activated by winter art happenings. Community-based winter art supports communality and develops its interaction skills and so it promotes community's well-being. Community's well-being reflects on the individual and his/her positive attitude about community. (Huhmarniemi, M. 2004, 118.) Community-based art also integrates the individual to his/her community. The integration encourages the individual to act and influence to his/her community and society and so the qualitative change in the community is possible. (Kurki, L. 2004, 124.)

Art comes near the individual and offers experiences of his/her own environment if the community-based art is realized in community's common and public places. Community-based art helps the individual to observe his/her environment and to influence its comfortability. (Huhmarniemi, M. 2003, 116.)

The history of certain place can be brought back to day light by using it as a theme in winter art. The traditions and stories of the place can be reflected to snow and ice

sculptings. This way the history of the place transfers to the next generation. The environmental approach makes winter phenomena a permanent part of the winter city mentality and increases the enjoyment of residents of the community (Jokela, T. 2003, 54). Winter art can also be exploited in economic life. Art gives spaces meanings which promotes winter tourism (Saarinen, J. 2004,152).



Photo: Jaakko Moilanen

Art educational view

Winter can offer very interesting and fascinating ways to create and do art education in schools. Ice and snow sculpting are both that sort of form of winter art that are quite easy to begin with and you don't

really need that much of instructions or guiding. Especially snow sculpting is easy to use in art education from lower grades to high school and also later in different studies. Most important is probably the fact that you need to have snow on the ground.

You can examine winter art from many aspects in the view of the art education. Focus on winter art can be environmental education where you emphasize the observation and the planning of surroundings. Architectural education gives you possibility to learn about structural matters, building and shaping. (Huhmarniemi 2003, 92.) Snow sculpting is easy to learn and do and it suits for children at all ages. You don't have to be an expert to start sculpting.

Community art project is also very inspiring method to use in winter art and it is very educational for art education. Integration to different subjects is developing. Winter art inspires to outdoor cultures and it is comprehensive and experiential.



Photo: Linda Zweyberg

Epilogy

Working with snow was fun and fast. Despite the heaviness, our workdays felt quite short and pleasant because of functioning work team. It was an honour to work side by side with the staff of snow village. Their work effort and entrepreneurship made an impression. Hopefully our work brings delight not only to the tourists, but also to the hotel staff and the people of Lainio.

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