

Katarina Imporanta

Mari Matinniemi

The Wind Park (Tuulipuisto)

Winter art at Kemi's Syväkangas

Comprehensive School



The night before the opening party.

WHAT

Syväkangas Comprehensive School carried out a winter artwork in their schoolyard in late winter of 2004 named Wind Park, which was formed from snow sculptures, other structures constructed from snow and small transient winter art works.

WHO

In addition to Syväkangas Comprehensive School, participants included Mari Matinniemi as the Winter Art Education Project's visiting teacher and Katariina Imporanta, an art education student from the University of Lapland. They worked as

instructors and were involved in all aspects of the project.

WHERE

Syväkangas Comprehensive School has over five hundred pupils and 38 teachers. The school building is L-shaped, and divided into wings whereby primary school and secondary school pupils work separately. The schoolyard is huge. Plans were made for use of the yard some time ago, but have remained unfinished. The plan was made from the point of view of a summer yard without considering winter use.



Shelters as a theme.



The exhibition in schools' sports hall gathers up all the fields of the project.

GOALS

The Syväkangas Comprehensive School yard is a challenging environment both in size and due to its different users. Mostly the lower grade pupils and preschool children use the yard, as secondary school pupils are not outside often. A goal was to consider, how winter art could make the yard more useable and enjoyable. The yard offered a great opportunity to make environmental art in which could pay attention also to the ecological values. One of the project's goals was to renew the face

of the schoolyard in winter.

It was hoped that teachers would be stimulated to consider the functionality of the yard. An aim was that solutions would arise from the school itself. Through winter art and winter culture organizers hoped to leave a lasting influence on the school culture, which would enable the continuation of the project.

Teachers were wanted to participate actively in the activities and development work, so that the school would be enough knowledge to continue working in the future. We wanted to make use of the teachers' own professional skills for winter art, for example through the development of subject integration. The development of new forms of collaboration, both internally and with outside organisations in the Syväkangas and Kemi areas, was also one of the goals.



The snow pile was used as and art gallery.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Wind and gales and in contrast, shelter and nests was chosen as the theme for the yard. Kemi is windswept due to its location by the sea and its accompanying winds. Snow provides protection in the middle of winter, for example many animals create winter shelters from it. For the theme we wanted to choose a subject that allowed abstraction and a variety of different perspectives. Additionally, one common theme gave the yard a unified look.

Even though at the lessons there were presented examples of both snow and ice art, the school decided that in this particular project will be used only snow as material, because the school didn't have any prior experience in winter art. There was however interest in working with ice, and some small ice art experiments were done during the project and will be developed in the future. Snow sculpting, relief making, snow building and methods arising from environmental art were chosen as the techniques.

In the autumn, with the guidance of an architectural student, pupils made a scale model of the schoolyard and snow sculptures. The model was displayed at the winter art project exhibition. The work was placed in the middle of the schoolyard, in

the place where all the snow from the yard was ploughed into a big pile every year. The pile was called a snow sausage and it was wanted to somehow utilize in the project.



The snow car could not be more realistic than this one.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project was started in October, when the responsibilities were shared among the participating teachers. Some teachers participated the workshop in which were made simple snow sculpting tools. Afterwards, teachers continued making and developing tools with the children in the craft lessons.

The teachers' workshop was conducted in January. Teachers designed snow sculptures and created them from snow blocks made by pupils. Designing their own work meant that any creativity-blocking attitudes were won over, which motivated work. A goal was in fact, that the teachers' workshop would be artistic and inspiring, which would also support working with the students. At the workshop they also tested self made snow-sculpting tools, and the development of the tools was carried on according to the teachers' experiences.

Design of the work and preparation of the scale model, was begun during lessons after Christmas, and the actual winter art project began in February. The keenest groups started snow sculpting immediately, when the first snow blocks were completed. Different groups, following the plan for the yard, made snow blocks. Days for sculpting were distributed over a week and a half. Pupils followed the work of other groups, and a stimulating learning environment emerged from the schoolyard for those starting later and for younger classes. The pupils approached the work with enthusiasm and work went ahead well.

The school project had an unpleasant

setback when, a weekend before the opening, most of the works were vandalised. However, the works were repaired and the project culminated on the 20th of February with opening celebrations. Mild weather quickly melted some of the sculptures and at the same time brought into focus the temporarily of winter art and transient nature of the material.



Performs in the openings of the Windpark.

RESULTS AND EFFECTS

Pupil groups and teachers from both primary and secondary levels took part in

the project, altogether including 11 teachers and over 250 pupils. Other teachers and pupils also participated indirectly to the project, for example the home economics pupils made and served drinks at the opening ceremony.

The middle yard was dominated by sculptures and the reshaped snow sausage made by the primary level art groups. A gallery was created from the snow sausage, onto which mathematics and astronomy classes created their works. The subjects of the works emerged from class work: the mathematics group made geometrical pieces into the gallery and the astronomy group created constellations on the snow sausage.

Next to the snow sausage was a group of sculptures made by secondary school pupils. The motifs of the work were wind, shelter and nest. Located at the edge of the middle yard, was the 5th grade pupils' work, which consisted of five separate works of art.

A sculpture collection arose in the space between the buildings and the street, which was created by 3rd and 6th grade pupils. The works in the gallery were themed to stories of wind and shelter. The shelter and nest themes inspired pupils to carve caves from snow, igloos, castles and arm chairs,

of which the makers themselves suggested: "What could be warmer and more nest-like than your own armchair."

The sense of community achieved during the project, was felt among the teachers as successful. According to one teacher, the best part was the making of their own tools and moulds for the school. It facilitates the continuation of such work the next year. The participating teachers stated that: " *We will continue from here and make it a school tradition.*"



Teachers workshop was one of the most important part of the whole project. Full learned teachers can continue winter art project in the following years.



The sunshine polishing the sculptures.

SUCSESSES AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

- + There was a good sense of community. Syväkangas School is a comprehensive school in which primary and secondary school are still working quite separately. For example staff rooms are separate. The project succeeded in bringing together different teachers and student groups as well as younger and older students.
- + The school was very motivated. The project began already in October, when sphere of responsibilities were divided among teachers. The making and development of snow sculpting tools was well organised. To have tools of their own will help organizing the projects in the future.
- + The project formed a common interest for the whole school, especially after the vandalising of the sculptures and blocks, when the sense of community rose instead of giving in. Publicity for the project grew and the broken blocks

were rebuilt.

- A future challenge is to emphasize the communal of a project, so that winter art does not form a project only for art students.
- From the perspective of teaching, the snow construction should be done with tighter schedule
- It would be nice, if new ways could be found to get close to winter art projects from an artistic sense. For example, methods of contemporary art could be utilized. Artistic challenges should not be forgotten behind enthusiasm and other goals. It would be good to analyse the works together, so as to determine their artistic merits. This could be rather difficult, unless a teacher of the group is actually familiar with artistic methods.
- It would be good, if at the start of a new winter art project, the previous years' achievements and viewpoints could be highlighted and analysed.
- The school itself have to take responsibility for organising winter art projects in the years to come. Is it possible without outside help, and others willing to oversee the project?

Photos:

Katariina Imporanta and Mari Matinniemi

Translated by Maxim Narbrough