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spring 2006

Vastavoima -a communal environmental art project in Heinäaho

As a future art teacher I'm interested of people, environment and their dialogues through art. As my project studies I wanted to arrange a project, which includes people to whom art has a strong meaning in their lives. When you are interested of making art, and you don't do it as living, (for example self-taught artists) the motivation is much stronger. That's why I invited seven people with an artistic background in my project. This kind of aspect is, I think, very important in the field of art education. The truth is, anyway, that we all are creative in our own way!



Picture 1. Large scale plaiting
Photo: Kati Turdén

Project called *Vastavoima* was a communal environmental art project. All of the participants were self-taught artists. It was held in a middle of Finland in the countryside, Viitasaari, *Mäntylä village*. The place was called *Heinäaho* and it had an art tradition with a strong "outsider art" context. For last ten years there has been held summer art exhibition in an old cow-shed for professional and also amateur artists. The owner of the place was a good friend and brilliant self-taught artist Heikki Kärkkäinen. He and his wife gave us free hands to carry out this project in their land.



Picture 2. Making the first willow rings.
Photo: Kati Turdén

In this project we designed and built a work or art together in the field near Heinäaho's courtyard. *Vastavoima*-work is a construction made mainly of natural materials and it has a diameter of five meters. In the work there is a willow-built sphere and gigantic human statues made from wire net and hay. The work *Vastavoima* symbolizes the spirit of the place:

enthusiasm of working together and doing things with own hands: making art without pressure and any rules. The team built the work in two weekends in June 2005. We were amateurs: neither of us had done environmental art before in this size. But we managed to do just fine with guts and creative minds.



Picture 3. Construction.

Photo: Kati Turdén

The aims of the project were to make environmental art and to try new techniques, to achieve experiences through participation of making art. One goal was to support communal working together and to bring art closer to common people in the countryside. Project provides ways of learning through art and hopefully it brings new kind of methods

in the context of folk art. The most important thing in this project was to work with hands, learning different art methods and social interaction.



Picture 4. Half of the sphere is ready but what next? Photo: Kati Turdén

This project was also a material to my Master of Arts degree. The theory I used in this study was Dewey's "Learning by doing" and Kolb's "Learning through experiences". The background context to this study was outsider art, environmental art and communal art context. My role in this project was to inspire and to work with the people and to investigate the activity.



Picture 5. Making the human figure of hay.
Photo: Kati Turdén



Picture 4. *Vastavoima* in it's opening ceremonies 3.7.2005. Photo: Timo Jokela

Testing with different art education methods in the field, with genuine community, brings new information and ideas to art education and it develops this kind of activity in the future. In this project the aim was to generate the artistic activity in the countryside and in small villages. I think there are many creative minds and active hands ready to act. It only needs somebody who inspirits the work trough art - I hope future art educators will see this chance!