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Land Art In Preschools. An Art Practice

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Abstract

The basis for my article is how, and if, a collaborative land art project can provide opportunities for such co-creating as suggested in the national framework plan for preschools, which explicitly states the child as a co-creator of a shared expressive culture. I further wish to propose land art as a meaningful cultural practice, closely connected to children's physical awareness and sense of place. In doing so, I use the concepts of sensation, making and knowledge, exploring them as mutually beneficial.

The way I worked to explore these matters, was to initiate and conduct a land art project in an open air preschool. I was with a group of children for several days. Adults and children worked together to make a shape, in a landscape well known to the children. While initiating, suggesting and participating, I experienced and observed the children's interaction with the land, with forms of knowledge and with each other.

My experiences and observations, that constitute my data from this project, are composed into a story. The writing was a process of organizing and analyzing, as well as presenting, observations and experiences. This is consistent with narrative analysis as defined by Polkinghorne (1995).

I connect my narrative to selected references to the Western history of art. These refer to knowledge needed to understand the concepts of land art, environmental art and related art work. They are also sources of knowledge for the children to interact with, and are, as such, referred to also in the narrative part of the article.

I further include a short summary of theories and traditions in Norwegian arts education, as well as a brief insight in the traditions and plans of Norwegian kindergartens/preschools¹. This offers knowledge of the institutional frameworks for cultural upbringing and socialization, and is here seen as a background for considering children's genuine participation in cultural practices.

Introduction

The landscapes in which we live our everyday lives are potential fields of artistic creativity. The rooms in which we perform our daily movements are possible playgrounds. Our surroundings may seem static, but are subject to the dynamic movements of the bodies that inhabit them, the wounds of time, and the newness following decay.

The national framework plans for preschools in Norway state that children are participants and co-creators of their cultural environments². In my work with preschool children and teachers on site-specific art projects, my aim is to heighten their awareness of their surroundings and the possibilities of creating art with what is right there. This implies exploring the site and its possibilities, using their intellect and senses in doing so. It also calls for knowledge, both of materials and handicraft, and of a vocabulary of form and artistic concepts.

In my study, I tell a story of such a collaborative project in an open air preschool. I wish to present sensation, making and knowledge seen as mutually beneficial. In making creative

¹ In this article, I mainly use the term preschool, rather than kindergarten. In Norwegian educational practice, both words have been used – but not describing different institutions. The main reason I use the term preschool here, is that in the project I describe, the children I worked with were five years old, and thus what we call “school-starters”. In the kindergarten/preschool there were no infants.

² (R11, p.30, section 2.6) *The national Framework Plan for the Contents and tasks of Kindergartens* (2011), in Norwegian called *Rammeplan for barnehagens innhold og oppgaver*, here referred to as R11.

imprints on our environment, we need to know about aspects of form, time and space. We also need to interact with the materials on site.

I further comment on how this kind of project is related to the history of western art and to traditions and theories in Norwegian arts and crafts education. These tell conflicting stories of why and how we teach art. I see these stories as major sources of knowledge as to how we understand children and their participation in cultural practices.

In this work, I propose knowledge of culture as inseparable from acting in culture. This provides an interesting basis for acting and learning in the field of art education. It is an issue for both schools and preschools, as well as for the education of teachers.



Research Method

The main part of my paper is composed as a storied case study. My data, or information, comes from observing a process in which children and adults worked together. I initiated and participated in this process. I found the logical way to work would be to organize and synthesize my information through the process of a narrative analysis. This is an approach

suggested by Donald E. Polkinghorne in his article *Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis* (Polkinghorne, in Hatch and Wiesniewski, 1995). The “bounded system” (Polkinghorne, in Hatch and Wiesniewski, 1995, p.15) required for this study, is defined by the theme of art making and knowledge, and the materiality and use of senses that is involved in the process. The practical outlines are drawn by the very situation: I was present at the preschool for this project, and have not concerned myself with studying aspects of the everyday institutional life that is not connected to my work.

The narrative part of the paper contains glimpses into the practice of artists working in ways related to the project. This dialogue with existing knowledge is crucial in developing cultural understanding and a sense of being a participant and a co-creator in the culture presented. In the second part of my paper I expand this field of knowledge. This part is also formed as a story, with a dialogical relationship with the preschool project. Liora Bresler writes: “Both art and qualitative research in the search for empathic understanding involve mediating back and forth between the personal and the public.” (Bresler, 2006, p. 53). Bresler further points to the ways of doing and becoming as essential for both artistic and research experiences: “...cultivating skills, sensibilities, and sensitivities. These ways of doing and becoming, I suggest, are characterized by dialogical processes that occur during aesthetic encounters.” (ibid, p. 54). This is a basic understanding for the way I have worked with this paper.

Outlines and Assumptions

For a few weeks I was engaged in an art project in an open air preschool. It was winter, shortly before Easter. The snow still lay heavy in the country surrounding the city of Trondheim. The preschool was situated on the edge of a large forest area, used for recreation and sports by the inhabitants in the city. The children were aged three to six. They learned to connect and cope with the changing seasons, from cold dark mornings with masses of snow to soft and warm spring with intense smells of earth and growth.

Working together, adults and children made a shape, or form, in the landscape. The story of this collaboration leads to my understanding of situated art as a field of opportunities for children to make an impact on their own cultural surroundings.

The project was a contribution to map out wishes, needs and possible approaches to working with art in preschools in Trondheim. The objective was for the children to experience themselves as participants in the expressive culture of their near surroundings. The national framework plans for preschools state that “the preschool must give the children opportunities to experience art and culture, and to express themselves aesthetically.” (R11, p. 36)

The story is seen within the context of traditions in pedagogics of art education and of Land

Art as described in art history. I choose this approach to fine tune my own understanding of what constitutes a good base for working with shapes in nature together with children in a communicative sphere, or room, for play and expression.

I see this case, or story, as representative for an approach to the practice of art. It is set in a preschool community. I have done similar work with older children and with adult students. The age of the participants is of no vital importance regarding the relevant pedagogical and aesthetical principles. Neither is the site. Similar processes could be carried out in a place of cultural dominance rather than of nature or symbols of such. Farming or industrial areas, urban landscapes or rooms; they could all constitute alternative grounds for similar art projects. It would, however, raise and change the conditions for certain issues of belonging, identity etc. These are not fields of inquiry that are central to the topic of this paper. Being much debated in connection with educational use of land art, they do however need to be commented.

A Story Of A Project In An Open Air Preschool

The educational manager in the preschool helped me facilitate my work. She was very supportive, giving me space for suggestions and action and encouraged the children's artistic activity and involvement. The other employees were also active in practical cooperation and facilitation. This was important to me. I am not used to working in a preschool on a daily basis, and have great respect for the professional cooperation concerning routine activities and attention to the needs of every child. As an outsider, one could easily feel that one is clumsily wrecking their professional structures. On the other hand, the preschool employees can feel insecure faced with a stranger introducing new ideas in the field of art as subject and profession. The artist, or art educator, needs to be respectful regarding the existing resources of the preschool. Coming from the outside to initiate changes on the inside. Knowledge of art must be linked to the place and the children's own resources in a way that gives the children the possibility to see themselves as participants in a cultural connection and a creative process.³

During parts of the winter, the preschool had the use of a lavvo camp. There were two lavvos, each with a wood stove in the middle. The children had sleeping bags there, to use when resting and listening to stories. Outside the lavvos there was a circle of snow, formed as a bench facing the fireplace in the middle. The camp was shared with another preschool, each

3 In contrast to earlier national plans for preschools, the framework plan of 2006/2011(R11) explicitly states the child as co-creator of a shared expressive culture (which is in constant development), rather than as the receiver of a fixed culture with an established understanding of the nature of art. See also Waterhouse 2008, p.1

using it half the winter season. It was about 20 minutes of skiing to reach the camp. It was used daily during the first weeks I spent with the preschool. The place where the camp was situated defined the area of our art work.



The art project required a very bodily presence. In the beginning there were the smells of the forest and collecting its excess: cones and twigs, spruce beard and moss. All lying in the snow, damp and cold. This was our material. It stuck to mittens and wet fingers that sensed and sorted; softly present until our hands were stiff with cold. Shadows and light. The hidden and the visible.



Tearing branches loose from week old snow. Heave and carry, riding on top of a sled full of branches. Twigs scratching hands. Sorting materials. Seeing the marsh, wide and white, choosing the placing and size of the form from the relations between marsh, branches, and the body's interaction with, position in or movement between these elements. The marsh, already inhabited by the lavvo camp and with tracks for skiing; marks of human use of the area. The edge of the forest. The branches that became our material, through a process of choosing and transporting. The larger branches an accomplishment to carry, long and heavy and scratching. Distinct, strong forms when laid on snow. Which direction? Inwards or outwards? Walls, and the space between them. Run and build. Create and inhabit the form, consolidating the branches' conversion from nature to child-made form.



Routine tasks occupy most of the day in the preschool. The first day, I met the children and familiarized myself with the facilities and routines of the place. This gave me a starting point to getting an estimate of the time and resources available for art work. I also participated in several conversations and demonstrations on everyday subjects, like dressing, rules of the peer group and how to carry a stone.

Form, materials. What do we find, what can we make? Cones, twigs and moss were used to make a round shape. A nest? Dark against the white snow. Between the bushes, not very visible. Maybe we should make something larger, out in the open marshland? Making the idea of form tangible. Composing with the forest and marsh and our shape resting there? Open? Loud? I thought of inside and outside, contrasts, positive and negative form. A spiral, the name of a shape, not a home for an animal, as the nest – but with possibilities of associating with a snail shell, a conch, a labyrinth, etc. – in addition to pure concepts of form.

The idea of a larger shape was mine. I wanted proportions the children could actually and

physically interact with. Available materials? We were not supposed to cut living trees or otherwise harm the natural surroundings. That was one of the basic rules of the area. Luckily, the preschool had just gotten permission to cut branches from a recently felled spruce. Ten children and three adults, two with sleds, went across the marsh to where our materials lay, frozen in icy crust. Cutting, pulling, ravaging, to get the branches loose. Some children worked intensely, while others were climbing and sliding on the hillside nearby.



Skiing was essential for getting around. All the children learned to ski, including putting on and taking off their own gear, and to carry a small backpack during their first winter. They leapt easily up- and downhill, quick and smooth, parts of the living landscape.



Through hard work and determination we got our branches loose and piled up on the sleds. Two of the children sat across the piles, their skis alongside them. The open area close to the camp was our site. The centre, and starting point, was decided on in collaboration. How stringent, how compact, how big, for the shape to assert itself in the landscape, for it to get a voice? The dimensions had to be adapted to the landscape, to the relations between the marsh, the elements of the camp and the edge of the forest. We talked about all this while we were building. A work-in-progress conversation, with terms of form and sensation and therefore essentially of an aesthetic nature. (Eagleton 1990, p. 28⁴)

As the spiral grew, more branches were retrieved to thicken the walls, or positive form, and to complete the shape in a size fitting the considerations we had talked about. An element in artistic composition and a frequent issue in land art is positive versus negative form. Michael Heizer's *Double negative* and Dennis Oppenheim's *Annual rings* (as shown in Kastner and

⁴ Eagleton here refers to Alexander Baumgarten, on aesthetics as «a discourse of the body», referring to the region of human sensation and perception.

Wallis 2010, p. 30 and p. 54-55) are obvious examples, alongside works of Smithson, Boezem (example from Marinus Boezem's work: *Die Groene Kathedral* (1987-) as shown in Dempsey, 2011 p. 119) and others. In our case, the space in between the walls of branches, and the area outside, would constitute the negative form. As the shape grew, this negative form was activated, and became part of the work.



As the children were building, some of them started running in the spiral. They referred to a game called “the shoemaker”. The game entailed a stop in the centre of the spiral, to repair a shoe. One child squatted there, in the role of the shoemaker. The rest were running, in and out of the spiral. Rules were introduced: no breaking of walls (positive form), and no bumping each other. If so happened, one had to stop to repair the wall, or to let the other child pass. This use of the shape made it come alive with meaning, participating in and connoting happenings and stories reaching far beyond the dialectics of pure form.

On a day of wind and sleet, the teachers decided to stay near the base house. Outside, figures were built of snow. Indoors, there was time to eat, rest and dry up. I brought out a book on land and environmental art (Kastner and Wallis, 2010) to look at certain pictures. We stopped

at some images of Robert Smithson's "Spiral Jetty", made in 1970 (Kastner and Wallis 2010, p.56-59). The book was sent round the table, held and handled, pictures scrutinized. The Spiral Jetty is an icon in the history of land art. A huge spiral, built in shallow water, with six and a half tons of earth and gravel. Imagine walking on that! Could we go in between, inside, or is the water too deep? Why isn't it broken by the water? Can we build one like it? The children were right there in the debate, as able participants of an art project: They had just built a spiral, this was right in their field of competence. Stories to be told, of the big spiral changing with water level and salt deposition.

Two weeks later we were back on the open marsh. The camp was dismantled. There were no signs of our big spiral. Maybe it got covered by snow. Did the other preschool, that had used the camp for the last fortnight, get to play in the spiral before it disappeared? From our point of view, everything was good. The marsh was shiny white, and new tasks were waiting to be explored.

In the time following the art project and the disappearance of the spiral, pictures from the process were laminated and hung in the branches in the grove of trees close to the base house. Parents came to see. The pictures glistened in sun and wind, the children playing near them sometimes touched them so they danced, catching the light. We laid cones on the ground to show where to walk between the trees.





The Site

Land Art is associated with bodily and material interaction with the physical environment the work is manifested in or engages in dialogue with. The setting is essential; maybe even a part of the art work. In the preschool project the children already had a close knowledge of the area we were to use. They went there to stay for the main part of the day for weeks on end. They were open minded about using the site for different purposes, as long as the basic rules on daily life and environmental issues were considered. The most obvious rules concerning our project⁵ were to not harm the forest, for instance by breaking branches. This facilitated a soft approach to the issue of materials.⁶ However, we were given access to a felled tree. We had permission to take what we could use from it. This made it easier to think and work with a large shape.

Woods and marsh are not obvious surplus stocks in February. No green buds, no lovely colours of autumn. The flora and watercourses of the ground are hidden under barren snow. Colours were therefore a minor theme. The shape and shadows of the woods and the marsh, clad in white, defined our work.

Our site was not the kind of wasteland that artists like Smithson and Heizer preferred for their monumental works. It was more in the way of the forestry sites of Andy Goldsworthy's work, though in its way somewhat barren in its frozen state.

The early American earth artists were noted for using big machines in large spaces to make huge art pieces, often situated in deserts or in places that were used, impoverished and abandoned by human industry. Jeffrey Kastner writes vividly of Land Art as “the most macho of post-war programmes. In its first manifestations, the genre was one of diesel and dust, populated by hard-hat-minded men, finding their identities away from the comforts of the cultural centre, digging holes and blasting cuts through cliff sides [...]” (Kastner, in Kastner and Wallis 2010, p. 15).

The English worked more quietly. The idea of the artwork returning to nature was essential. Richard Long walked in the English landscape, leaving subtle traces or, in some instances, none that could possibly be seen. His travels were mapped or otherwise documented. Art historian Carol Hall beautifully described Long's work as “ephemeral gestures on the land” (Hall, as quoted in Kastner and Wallis 2010, p.35), referring to their minimalistic and

⁵ In addition to routines; meals, tending the fire in the lavvo etc.: practical, rhythmical norms and precautions.

⁶ It was set for associating to environmentally cautious statements, ref the seventies *gentle and temporary displacements of some natural elements...*, Wallis, p.34 in Kastner and Wallis 2010.

temporal nature.

Long's way of working provides an interesting basis, or resonance, for working with children. The notion of movement, of travel; traces, or no traces. The moving body, doing stories in its own right.⁷ And communicating: Mapping, telling, representing.

A newer example of the more quiet approach to land art is Andy Goldsworthy, also English. He uses natural material he can find on site, and makes shapes of varying sizes and levels of difficulty. He works with formal elements in terms of contrasts, colours, and form, in accentuating the beauty of movement and time. His work inspires both children and art teachers. In many of his art pieces, the notion of time and movement is seemingly stretched to a limit.⁸

Brian Wallis comments a tendency among the British artists to experience, and seek, engagement with authenticity itself, for instance in the case of walking in a landscape. This differentiated their attitude from the early American earth artists. The latter tended to work on a more overt conceptual basis. Richard Long said of his own work: "My work is real not illusory or conceptual. It is about real stones, real time, real actions." (Long, as quoted in Kastner and Wallis 2010, p.35).

The ferocity and grandour of the early American earthworks might be understood as a reaction to leaving the accommodating art world behind. Like slamming the door and get drunk or go running when splitting up from an affair. Creating a distance. Yet, Kastner further comments, "for a number of groups – especially women – such a distancing from power was hardly something that required an effort." (Kastner and Wallis 2010, p.35). Feminist criticism was an important force in the changing currents of the art world. Issues of the body and of the everyday, the community and cultural identity, held materials for artistic investigation. I would like here to focus on Ana Mendieta. She is an example of an artist expressing her sexual identity in working on and with the land. I find her special in the direct collaboration between her body and the earth, or land. Her works have the quality of a symbiotic relationship with the landscape. She literally inscribes her presence onto the landscape. The *Siluetas* series consists of imprinted female forms in the landscape, built in mud, rocks or earth, assembled with soft elements of the land, stained in blood, etched in fire or ash, and washed

⁷ Here is a possible area of exploring children and art practice, seeing the statement of body movement as a primary expressive force.

⁸ See examples of Goldsworthy's work in Kastner and Wallis p.68-69, read of him in Waterhouse p.8 or do both in Goldsworthy's own publications.

away in water or smoke.⁹

The artists of past decades who I have presented here, show different angles to site-specific earthwork, or land art. I have presented them as displaying interesting approaches to working with land art in an educational setting. They provide different ways of collaborating with, and challenging, concepts of art, land, body, politics and identity. In doing this, they all use formal elements, or terms of such, to make their art pieces function as such. This is a language of art that can be taught, and used, in art practices beyond established art contexts.

Spatial Practices

The phenomenon of land art, or earthworks, appeared in the nineteen sixties. Some artists did not appreciate the growing institutionalization in the art world. The institutionalization included commercializing of the art market, and a reification, or objectification, of the work of art. The notion of the work of art as a self-referring object dominated the discourse. (Eagleton, 1990, Kastner and Wallis 2010, p.25).

Several artists felt a need to break with this paradigm. The gallery, the white cube, was the supreme arena of modern art. Robert Smithson was an outstanding artist in formulating the notion of land art. In 1968, he organized an exhibition in New York, *Earthworks*. The art that was shown, challenged conventional conceptions of art. Several of the participating artists showed enormous, open air works, far too large to be a part of any collection. It was not possible to show these works in the gallery. They had to be represented in photographs or referred to in other ways.

Working on site with children is part of an existing art practice. It is not a substitute for making (more or less) lasting objects to take home. It is not a practice we need to find vicarious motives for engaging children in. It is a way of making, and it is a way of participating in a contemporary culture. In participating, one relates to the dialectics between land and shape, materiality and mind. Documenting and communicating the project brings it a step further. In terms of learning, the after-work, talking and planning, provide the children with a new angle to understand and remember. So does the representation of the land work for parents or others to partake in the experience, the achievement and the joy.

Earthworks changed how we experience art. The concept of dissemination was radically altered. The works that were represented by photographs or by text, established a sense of

⁹ On Mendieta, including pictures of her work, in Kastner and Wallis p.121-123.

absence. The works were either far away, or destroyed. Critic Craig Owens commented on the change being “a radical dislocation of the notion of point-of-view, which is no longer a function of physical position, but of mode (photographic, cinematic, textual) of confrontation with the work of art.” (Owens, as quoted in Kastner and Wallis 2010, p. 26).

In his essay *A sedimentation of the Mind*, Robert Smithson proposed Earth Art as a challenge to formalist views of sculpture as studio-based art and as autonomous, self-contained objects. Secondly, he argued that earthworks had little to do with conventional notions of nature or landscape. He wrote: “The desert is less nature than concept, a place that swallows up boundaries.” (Smithson, here as quoted in Kastner and Wallis 2010, p. 25). Thirdly, Smithson claimed concern with *place* or *site* as essential for compelling artists. By this he meant “not only specific overlooked locations, but also a conceptual relation between viewers and boundaries, inside and outside, centre and periphery.” (Kastner and Wallis 2010, p. 25).

According to Smithson, earthworks was not a return to the landscape tradition. Neither did it have to do with either the notion of the sublime, with ritual landforms or with traditional notions of the picturesque.¹⁰

So what was the core of earthworks? Using obviously formal elements, but denying formalist ideas. Fascinated by useless spaces rather than pretty landscapes. Wallis sums up Smithson's view: “[...] earthworks, then, was both pre-existing sites on the land and artistic interventions that marked, traversed, constructed or demarcated territory. In other words, both operations involved actions or processes – pointing or mapping – the might be called spatial practices.” (Kastner and Wallis 2010, p. 27).

In its dialectics with site, time and viewer, earthworks related to minimalism: works that were no longer to be seen as self-contained objects, but rather referring directly to the architectural space of the gallery and to the viewer, participating in that space. On the other hand, it was also a part of what Craig Owens called “a radical dislocation of art” (Craig Owens, as quoted in Kastner and Wallis p.27), referring to a wider contemporary practice of spatial related art that included dematerialization of the art object and conceptual projects based on geographic

¹⁰ Wallis points out, however, that the English philosopher Uvedale Price proposed the picturesque as a category that Smithson recognized as based on *change and change in the material order of nature*, a more practical and pragmatic view of the landscape, based on real experience and real land. Wallis, with Smithson quote, Kastner and Wallis p.27.

and economic decentring, and the rethinking of social organization of space, relations and the body.¹¹

Why Land Art?

Working with children and land art, terms of identity, culture and tradition have a tendency to emerge as legitimating reasons for what we do. Together, these terms indicate that the history of the place and our human story are interwoven with a kind of necessity or logic of belonging. I would find it interesting to question how plans and books concerning artwork with children present this area of topics. *What kind of* connection with earth, nature, culture, tradition, and how, and why, is this useful for inspiring a sound sense of identity? If that is an objective? This is a complicated area, worthy of philosophical and psychological scrutinizing. A lack of answers need not stop us from using the immense supply this transferable art form, with both ideals and clean cut formal work to teach and inspire, that the land art tradition provides us with.

I write about a preschool project, but need to refer to the pedagogics of Norwegian schools. The preschools, or kindergartens, do not have a long history as pedagogical institutions. They have, therefore, adapted many of the school ideals.

The Norwegian school curricula have, since 1939 (N39), stated art and crafts as an essential area of learning. From being subject areas of utilitarian purposes, the boundaries between drawing, textile work and woodwork were softened. The pedagogical arguments shifted from the maintenance of practical knowledge, into arguments of general education¹², psychology and creative growth. In 1960, the three subjects were merged into one. This new subject was called Forming, which literally translated means shaping, or giving shape. The psychological growth of each child and the belief that children had a natural need to express themselves, was central to the subject. In the seventies, this was supplemented by social criticism and media awareness, coupled with an explicit weight on the individual¹³.

Many art teachers felt that the focus on creativity and individual growth in the sixties and seventies went at the expense of pupils gaining practical skills and subject content knowledge. How can one be creative with little or no skills and knowledge as tools for one's creativity?

¹¹ More in Kastner and Wallis p.28: on Happenings, Fluxus, Conceptual Art and Situationism. Artists like Yoko Ono (*Map pieces*, incl. *Draw a map to get lost*) and Douglas Huebler (*This way, Brown*, passers-by asked to draw maps to various locations)

¹² Almenndannende argumentasjon/general educational argumentation.

¹³ On issues of school traditions and curricula, see Solberg 1998.

This was a primary discourse in the politics of the subject area throughout the seventies and eighties. The process culminated in a new subject, Art and Crafts. The subject was presented in the curriculum of 1997 (L-97). It focused on skills, as well as environmental consciousness and an awareness of Norwegian and European traditions and culture. In 2006 (L06), the emphasis on skills and knowledge was strengthened with defined goal achievements. At the same time, the concept of understanding the education of children and youths as one coherent unit, from kindergarten and forwards, was strengthened.

As for the arts in the kindergartens, the name Forming was kept, with much of the subjects original intentions of psychological and creative growth. In addition, the importance of cultural participation is stressed in the national framework plans for the kindergartens/preschools (R11, p.21).

Kindergartens, or preschools, were virtually non-existing until the stable growth of the nation's economy from the 1960's, with the growing need for a labour force that included women. From being a combination of retention and guarded playgrounds, the demands on pedagogical and school-preparing contents in preschools have increased steadily.

In 2012, regulations for a new framework plan were presented (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2012). In these regulations, Forming as a subject, or separate area, is not mentioned. Instead, the arts (drama, music and visual arts) are presented as one joint subject area, called Arts, Culture and Creativity. In the education of preschool teachers, this subject area was implemented from 2013. The new framework plan will be introduced in 2017. It is still in working progress, and it is a case of great concern and excitement how the plan will handle the different traditions and implications from different educational agencies. Parallel to the consciousness of society's need of early educational preparation for later schooling and studies, are the insights of children's way of sensing, and making sense of, the culture they are part of and participants in. These topics need not be contradictory. It is still an educational issue whether we let the goal-centred pedagogics overrule the knowledge of children's inherent ability of learning and creating.

Specific for Norwegian kindergartens and preschools, in comparison with the school curricula and educational practice, is an awareness of the necessity of play, and of the child's bodily knowledge of its surroundings (R11, p.6 and p.11). Professional educators of young children find it crucial that these matters remain important issues in the preschool years.

Adults working in preschools or kindergartens need to be aware of children's topological understanding of room, and of playing being connected to children's basic understanding of their physical and social surroundings. Thus, referring to my chapters about The Site and of

Spatial Practices, I wish to stress the potential of working with site-specific art both indoors and outdoors – in connection with the concept of play. In opposition to the trend of kindergartens/preschools as mere preparation for school, it is important that we claim areas of learning and living that are specifically suited to young children. Land art/site-specific art is such an area.

Not all preschools are located near nature. Very few have a specific agenda to actually use nature as their main pedagogical setting. This is not a hindrance for working with site specific art. The general assumptions are the same, whether working in an urban or a rural setting. One can obtain similar rooms for creative imprint in rural areas. The formal aesthetics, as well as the play factor and physical awareness, are relevant in both cases. The setting can be of importance if one wants to work with issues of identity or belonging. The sense of being there, exploring and creating, making an imprint, opens for some degree of ownership or connectedness with the site.

In my own art practice I work with composition, and formal aspects ensuing this, such as: Density and space, positive and negative form, surface, transitions, contrasts, rhythm. Formal aspects in Smithsons work and in Long's stringent paths give inspiration and ideas for artwork. Phenomena like movement, light and decay are dimensions that expand the elements of art practice to include time and space. Integrated in the process is the body's experience in working with materials that affect the senses with softness, smells and scratches.

Land Art is not a new art form, but can be understood as contemporary because of the break with modernism. It is also essentially an art that interacts with its surroundings. Subjective participation is crucial. Dan Karlholm writes: “The balance has shifted from the work to the creative beholder – whether artist, public or curator. From object to subject, from work to text and context in the here and now.” (Karlholm 2011, p.20).

In 2010, Chicago museum of contemporary art showed the exhibition *Earthworks*.¹⁴ The exhibition refers to Smithsons important role as a writer and artist as touchstones “for contemporary artists for their rigorous artistic and theoretical investigations and for the way in which they married concept and form.”

¹⁴ The exhibition consisted of Sam Durants *Partially Buried 1960s/70s Dystopia Revealed (Mick Jagger at Altamont) & Utopia Reflected (Wavy Gravy at Woodstock)*, 1998. Mary Broggers *Earthwork* (2000). Robert Smithsons film *Spiral Jetty* (1970), documenting the building of Spiral Jetty. *Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago*. (Exhibition review, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago: <http://mcachicago.org/exhibitions/past/all/252>).

Land art as collaboration and education constitutes a unique mixture of pedagogic form and art dialogue. Doing land art together is a pedagogical means: there are no detours, no vicarious motifs, no *techne* needed to start off. The artist, or teacher, must of course possess knowledge, and the ability to constitute a real collaborative setting. Artwork is real, it's what we do, using our real bodies, our real minds, real materials, and real actions.

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