

THE GOOD FRIDAY WALK

Anne Mette



Figure 1, Sea urchin on rock.

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021

Dønna, an island located in northern Norway, is a part of a large archipelago with thousands of islands and reefs. Traditionally, there has been a lot of fishing there. The name of the island can have several meanings. It is believed that the prefix could mean either wave or goose down in old Norse. In the tidal zone, birds eat mussels and children use empty shells for play. In this text, I want to discuss children's culture along the coast as it provides an opportunity to get to know the sea and the environment, and if possible, contribute to a more respectful relationship with nature.

LANDSCAPE WHERE THE WORK IS RELATED

I can still sit on the pier built by earlier generations, worn planks that smells of oil and fish. I can also see tools from today's fishing industry: ropes, plastic balls and garbage washed ashore. Looking at the small fjords created by the ice age and polished by the sea, the tide rises and falls. The life in the sand lies in front of me, with the sound of the waves, birds, and wind. This year I have decided to walk "the Good Friday walk" with my family. For me, it was important to collect the stories and experiences about the Good Friday walk so I might be able to share it with my own children and friends. Since I am also a teacher, it is important for me to see if some of old traditions can be brought into the school to give more meaning to more exploratory, creative and sustainability learning in subjects.

Easter is celebrated on the coast in this area on the first Sunday after the first full moon at the spring equinox. The rising moon and changes in the landscape create wonder and fascination. When the moon is full, the tide is low and it is excit-



Figure 2, Ropes and fishing gear

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021



Figure 3, The moon and the sea

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021



Figure 4, Children's play

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021

ing to walk in the tidal zone. Seaweed, seaweed fleas, sand, crabs, and shells appear when the tide is ebbing. The tide rises and falls at a regular rate, and this movement changes the landscape in step with the tide. Movement is also central to new materialism, where movement is understood as an all-encompassing matter (Rousell & Irwin, 2013).

ENCOUNTERING ART AND NATURE CAN CREATE INSIGHT

New materialism has also contributed to the field of education where environmental issues and art play together (Rousell & Irwin, 2013). Teaching through a creative practice where multiple agencies disrupt and interrupt each other, movement and materiality are also seen as agentic forces in art and learning processes. Learning through arts then become entangled with the shared materiality of all things which we are all composed. A co-collaboration in which matter as much as the human has the responsibility for the art process. The art process is not by the agency, but through multiple agencies which disrupt each other. The challenge is to what extent the artist become attentive to and responsible of material entanglements in their agential becoming (Rousell & Irwin, 2013).

Playing with children at the traditional shell gathering gives us the opportunity to pay attention to the material dimension, a kind of materiality in which the surroundings are characterized by the ocean, sand, fish and small organisms by the sea. It might also give the possibility to experience materiality through practical and aesthetic activities. Land art and collaborative art are forms you might find in teaching, (Gårdvik, Sørmo and Stoll, 2019, p.19) and an art based environmental education is based on the belief that sensitivity to the environment can be developed by aesthetic and practical processes.

Shells have been used for food (bioforsk.no) and many associate shells with ornaments. The hard shells form exquisite shapes and have fine lines, different colours and are good to hold in the hand.

The heart shell, *Cerastoderma edule*, belongs to a family of a dozen species. It can grow up to 5 cm, and has the shape of a heart when seen from the side. It has evenly distributed clear ribs running from the hinge between the shells. Mussels, *Mytilus edulis* grow up to 10 cm in a kind of oval shape and are dark blue with a pearl lustre on the inside. Cow shells, *Artica islandica*, are rounded with a brown layer as long as they are living, and can grow up to 13 cm in diameter, when they die they turn white (Sortland, 2020).

Along the coast in northern Norway, the shells have traditionally been used as toys. Playing with shells is still relevant. If shells could replace plastic toys, it would be important for the environment as well (Sortland 2020). In a sustainable perspective, it will be necessary in pedagogical and artistic contexts to pay attention to the environmental challenges facing the world. In the school context, the new Norwegian curriculum (2020) states that more subjects will be more practical and exploratory. Subjects such as arts and crafts and science are specifically mentioned.

Rousell & Irwin (2020) are also concerned with environmental art pedagogy that responds to the rapid change in material conditions for young people in social and environmental worlds.

I am curious about children's culture in the area where I live. Waiting for the rising moon, and seeing the water disappear opens the door to engagement and exploration. I still remem-

ber my mother and grandmother playing on the shore with me when I was a little girl, looking at the moon, waiting and hoping for sea treasures. My purpose through this study is a kind of storytelling through practical and aesthetic processes related to the landscape. The intention is to explore an activity where the cultural heritage is still relevant.

A PART OF THE LANDSCAPE

According to Ingold (93), the landscape is a map of life that show work from previous generations, their steps and tracks that are left behind. Ingold points out that by living in the landscape, it becomes a part of us, as we become a part of it. For people living by the sea, their activities are related to the ocean and important for those who live and dwell therein. Therefore, the children's play will also be dependent on the surroundings.

Rousell & Irvin (2020) also point out that environmental art pedagogy is artistic and open processes that provide learning through involvement in the environment and creative experiments. It is about emotions, movement, materiality and the sense through bodily experience in learning and teaching.

THE GOOD FRIDAY WALK

The Good Friday walk is associated with exploring and forming. Elderly people share stories of how children and families collect shells, display them and keep them in a small box so that they could play with them later. The shells become animals on the farm. The children are the farmers, building barns and taking care of the animals. Heart shells are sheep,

and cow shells are cows, mussels can be goats or foals. Sami children have also used shells as symbols for reindeer. The children must provide them with food and drink, prepare for calving and slaughter. This is a role play, where each individual has his barn that is his or her responsibility (Sortland 2020).

Studying children's play in the environment can relate to methodical practices that Rousell and Irvin (2020) bring up. The methodology operates through relational practices of art making, researching and learning (Irvin 2008). It is an ecology of practices in which human and non-human agencies are always entangled in processes of co-composition, negotiation and constructive function, (Stengers, 2005). This is also about exploring how art is expressed without human intervention, but also activating a field that includes the human but is not at all dependent on it (Manning 2015).

The philosophy in new materialism recognizes the power of action, the vitality of plants and animals and forces of nature. The indigenous people recognize this, as well. The point is that matter is a force that materializes and expresses potential in the indefinable of nature (Ingold 2011). The moon's gravitational force gives the tide motion and dictates what happens on the shore. When the sun, moon and earth are in line, the ebb and flow tides are at their extremes. The tidal waves are up to a mile long in the open sea areas and create the high and low tides.

This past Good Friday, the tide was low tide towards evening, and provided the framework for where life unfolds in this story. The weather was cold, the grass was still straw-coloured and it made a crispy sound on the way down to the seafront. The birds had just returned, and still did not make much sing-



Figure 5, Picked shells

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021



Figure 6, Picked shells

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021



Figure 7, Floating elements

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021

ing sound, yet. Fast feet past rusty bolts, ropes and plastic balls, and followed the tide. "Someone should have picked up the trash", said one of the children. Algae blooms turned the white shells green, a form of industrial pollution from farmers nearby.

The clay sand sucked the foot back and reminded you that you were not alone. The feeling of the wet feet disappeared when you got engaged in the task. The eyes were looking for shells that could be cows, dogs and sheep. We sat on our knees, sifting the sand through our fingers like an hourglass from top to bottom. The hands were digging, forming lines in the sand. Cold fingers picked small shells, white, blue and yellow. The sand packed under nails and sifted between the fingers. Hair became wet, and the sea salt settled in the nose and the salty taste laid on the tongue. The shells were put one after the other in the sand, the large and small separated in their own piles. These were the animals to be taken home, to be fed and cared for in the play barn. The kids worked to create abstract ideas to visible forms, used their senses, heart shell in the hand turned to sheep. The environment itself was framing practices that modulate the relations between the elements, and give the play an opportunity to create a source for knowing the nature and tasks (Rousell and Irwin, 2020).

The shell sorting gives lines, rhythm and creates movement, shell after shell, and reminds one of the sun and the moon's line play with the tide. The tide turns, and the shells may disappear. Some were picked up and taken home. Older people I spoke with express joy that this cultural heritage is still alive, which increases interest in the local coast, and the diversity of nature.

Movement and materiality can be seen as primordial elements of environmental arts. Pedagogy emerging as a

choreographic force that brings movement, and materiality together and give settings which creates opportunities for participation and learning (Rousell and Irwin 2020).

I took pictures to document the walk, and plan to create an artist book that expresses the activities at the Easter tide. The artist's book become a small wooden chest, 16x16 cm, that contains expressions from forming with shells and other natural materials in addition to sketches on paper, telling the story of the walk. The work and connection between body, materiality, shell at the shore, and peoples left behind might give some insight about forces in nature and materiality. In this context, it is the moon, the sea and the shells that provide this opportunity for people. The sand sticks, and the tide gives you a sense of hurry, agencies that provide resistance. The power of action lies in the forces of nature, where matter also is a force that materializes and expresses potential in elements (Ingold 2011). The man and the walk must cooperate with forces outside oneself, and co-create with elements that is more than human (Rousell and Irwin 2020).

The story-telling box invites exploration, and provides a story of people, places and activities and encourages thoughts of the environment by the sea. Perhaps it will bring up aspects about sustainability, as well.

The landscape is heterogeneous, a contoured textured surface with different things, living and non-living, and life depends on what was done in the past (Ingold 93), in this way, past tasks can still be relevant through narratives and pedagogical approaches.

The tide gives anyway the place a unique character. The smells of salt, water and moist sand. The Good Friday Walk



Figure 8, The walk

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021



Figure 9, Children's play

Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021



Figure 9, Children's play

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is a kind of task that is constitutes the present, and it gathers the past and the future into itself. The walk is social, require collaboration and agencies attend to one another. By watching and listening we can feel each other's presence, adjusting over movements in response in a kind of mutual tuning relationship. When the tide is low, the walks of experiences are long, and at Good Friday the walk is longer.

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Figure 10, The Good Friday Walk. Photograph: Anne Mette Bjørnvik Rosø, 2021