



ART NAVIGATOR 2: What was done and why

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Art Schools for Children
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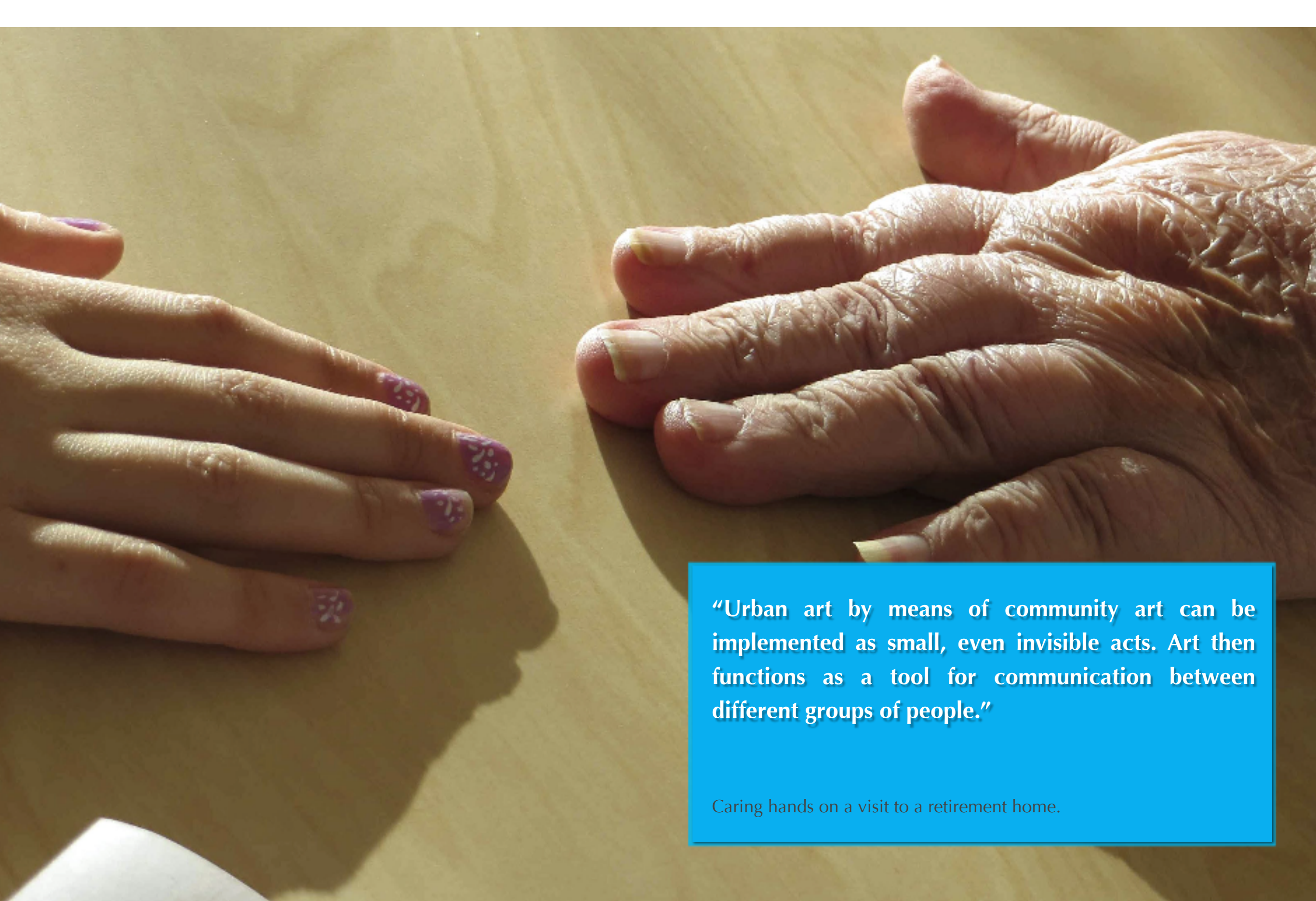
ART NAVIGATOR 2:

What was done and why

“Spontaneous actions led to contemporary works of art with ideas being spawned in the process.”

The Maid of Finland dressed in spring clothes. Photo: Heli Tiainen





“Urban art by means of community art can be implemented as small, even invisible acts. Art then functions as a tool for communication between different groups of people.”

Caring hands on a visit to a retirement home.

Art Navigator 2, a development project for contemporary art education, was launched in the fall of 2012 and involved visual art schools across Finland. Student-centered pedagogy was at the heart of this development project. The shared theme was “Urban Art,” and the entire community – teachers, students and local residents – participated.

Keywords: urban art, student-centered pedagogy, documentation, joy, cooperation

In recent years, both urban and community art have increasingly expanded, both in scope and in application. Our project has reacted to this moment. Student-centered pedagogy is considered important, yet the main question is how to apply more of such pedagogy in art education.

One of the project’s main goals was to find opportunities for teachers and students to work together. Teachers certainly have a great deal of experience with urban (see Niskala 2016) and community art, but how does one make use of this experience as part of a school’s program? In the **Art Navigator 2** Project, teachers and students formed working groups in which they studied, discussed, created, and executed diverse urban art ventures. The teachers did not offer any ready-made concepts, and the students were engaged in the undertaking right from the beginning. The creative process was documented throughout, and the related descriptions were written jointly by students and teachers at the end: What was done and why? What happened? Was the result successful? What might be done in future such projects? The project also contributed to developing activities in the schools themselves, gained deeper understandings of their local areas.

The results can be seen on the project’s web pages (see taidenavigaattori2 2016). The art festival of light, “Light wins over the darkness”, was held simultaneously in several visual art schools around Finland on the 14th of November, 2013. In the fall of 2014, the project partners organized a traveling exhibition, and the magazine presenting the final projects was published.

The Ministry of Education has given a support to our **Art Navigator 2** Project. Project coordinator was Lohja Art School for Children and Young People.

The aims for the project

- To develop methods of teaching contemporary art in cooperation with other art schools, present the possibilities for urban art and introduce methods of student-centered pedagogy.
- To systematically document the progress of the project.
- To convey that urban art is not blurred or indistinct; rather it is playful, experimental and interactive art that can be implemented by an entire community.

The aims for the teachers

- To reinforce the significance of play, joy and fearlessness in teaching.
- To promote interactive working among students, teachers, and the local community.
- To demonstrate that even a small work of art can be surprising and can stimulate local discussion.
- To be experimental in daily routines and highlight creativity.

The aims for the students

- To demonstrate that art has a positive impact and touches people.
- To show that works of art can be created collaboratively with others.



“Teachers and pupils found that a project developed around light was stimulating and inspiring, and many want to continue working with light in the future. Someone even mentioned that light has been the most inspiring theme so far.”

The theme of light inspired both students and teachers.
Photo: Niina Ala-Fossi



“The project has furthered the experiments and implementation of new courses of action. It has generated a sense of meaningfulness and an acknowledgment of possibilities for collaborative learning among and between pupils, teachers, and local residents. The school has more interaction and openness in its relation to the surrounding world and its partners.”

The art event Open Light Mansion in the Helsinki neighborhood called Roihuvuori. Photo: Joni Sarkki

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“In the course of the project, the school turf expanded into the city space, and new ideas emerged about where to give lessons and who to cooperate with. Small urban art events are eye-openers and create opportunities for encountering different kinds of people.”


A drawing event in the square on the mall.
Photo: Alina Poutiainen, Max Tabell

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“The contemporary art project opened new perspectives on the city space; self-made boundaries were crossed during the project, pupils came to grips with the city in space and considered ways of being there. Communal events created encounters, and new networks were formed. Spontaneous actions led to contemporary works of art with ideas being spawned in the process.”

Community Silent Street Dance in the streets of Hämeenlinna. Photo: Antti Hämäläinen




“Urban works of art brought joy and aesthetics to the environment and increased the sense of community. The works of art encouraged and delighted both the artists and the spectators. Modifying and beautifying one’s own environment was an empowering experience.”

ARTboretum, a work of urban art in the light of evening during a parade in downtown Kokkola. Photo: Kukka-Maaria Koskinen



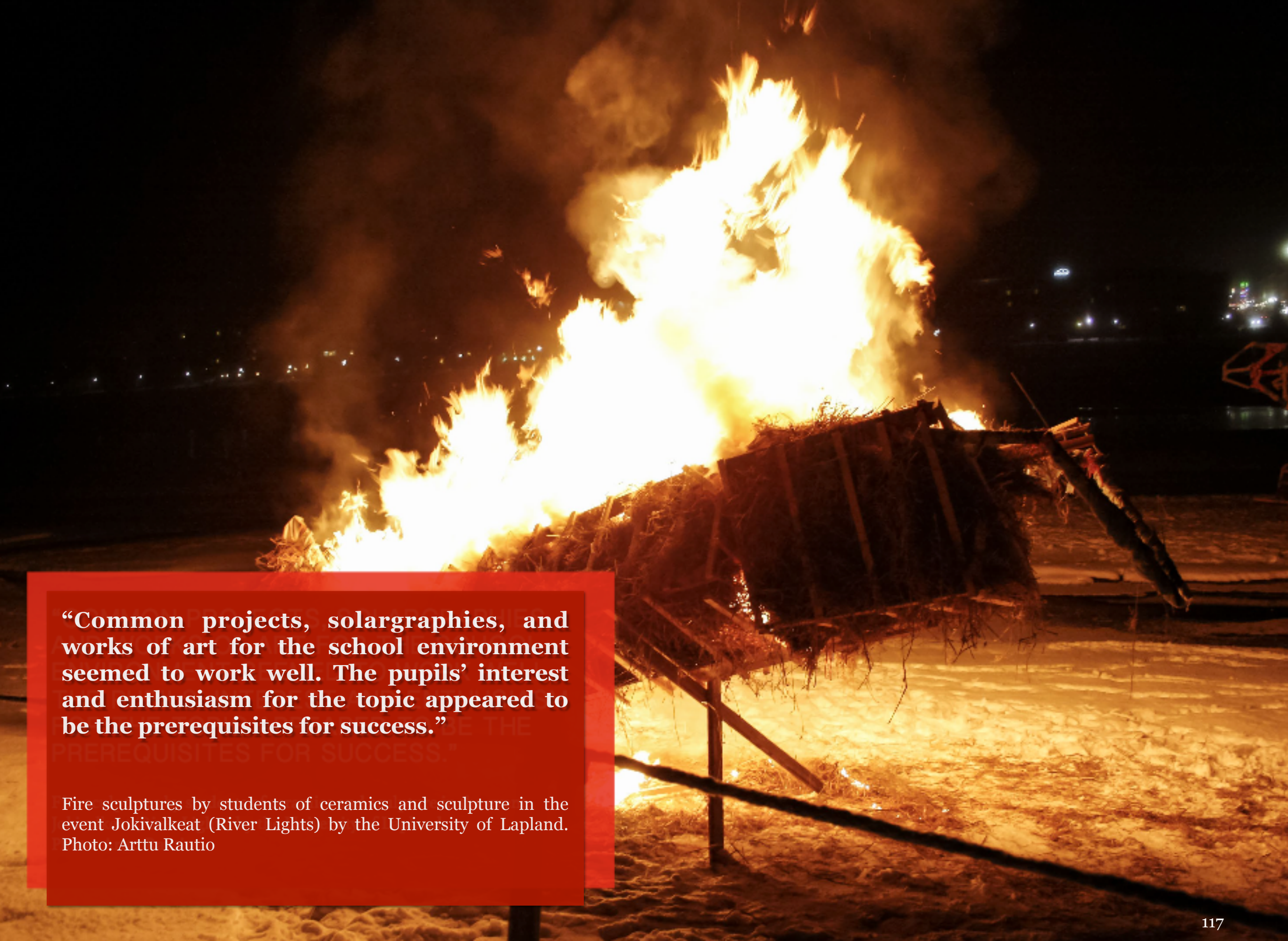
“For the first time in the dark season, in the evening, fearless of the weather, we bravely took off. The window gallery gave the pupils’ work excellent visibility, the urban art event combined the strengths of local art schools, and the lantern garden started an intimate tradition... We were able to create successful encounters. We were present in parts of the city where life is ongoing. Through our art we were part of many people’s everyday lives.”

Saints of the Lohja Church were taken for a coffee in a local Café Lauri.



As a theme, urban art was interesting. And it was a coup. The project idea was that urban art does not need great resources to display works of art. Rather, it needs involvement in the activities of doing. In practice, teachers observed that student-centered pedagogy demands time and thorough planning beforehand.”

Light installation Light on the Porch. Photo: Timo Penttilä



“Common projects, solargraphies, and works of art for the school environment seemed to work well. The pupils’ interest and enthusiasm for the topic appeared to be the prerequisites for success.”

Fire sculptures by students of ceramics and sculpture in the event Jokivalkeat (River Lights) by the University of Lapland.
Photo: Arttu Rautio



“We had feelings of joy and fulfillment, we were in constant interaction with people, we did something new and exciting outside the visual art school, and we got to share a great collective memory, whose physical signs will also last for long time.”

Mural in the Virtatie underpass, Vantaa.



All pictures and quotations in this article are related to Art Navigator 2 educational projects produced by 11 different Art Schools for Children and young People in Finland: Espoo, Helsinki, Hyvinkää, Hämeenlinna, Kokkola, Lohja, Pori, Rovaniemi, Tampere, Vantaa and Vihti.

Project team

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