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Topics: Contemporary artistic and art educational approaches to diversity and cultural changes

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Children's Wellbeing through Art in Lapland During Reconstruction. The influence of art activities by foreign artist and aid worker.

Anniina Koivurova

University of Lapland, Finland; anniina.koivurova@ulapland.fi

This presentation investigates the physical and mental representations of childhood and everyday life after the Second World War in northern Finland. The material analysed consists of 141 drawings (i.e. drawings, paintings and paper cuts) by Lappish schoolchildren during 1946 and 1947. They are collected by a Canadian painter and academic Naomi Jackson (Groves), who did relief work in Lapland after the Lapland war. After she deceased, the collection was donated to the Provincial Museum of Lapland.

Naomi Jackson as an artist, linguist and art educator is an empowering example about the influence on well-being through art. She arranged art activities for the local schoolchildren. Her reform pedagogic approach gives an interesting viewpoint to Finnish teaching of the time.

The analysis of the drawings draws on perspectives from visual culture studies and illustrates the intertextual connections between the children's pictures and visual imagery. The drawings reflect the national mental imaginary as well as the local school aesthetics, ethics and norms that prevailed at the time.

Naomi Jackson encouraged children to make drawings about their lives, to be sent to the foreign helpers. One of the aims was to increase aid during reconstruction. This can be seen also as a project to mentally unite the nation. The drawings both reconstruct and comment on what was an imposed cultural agenda. Moreover one can reflect on children's own worlds. Thus the material gives voice to local children during the time of many challenges.