

Intervista per artisti "groenlandesi"

Agency: University of Genova, Faculty of the Arts and Philosophy.

Description of the project: the aim of the research is to investigate about the actual relationships between Denmark and Greenland, how these identities define themselves into this relation and what are the perceptions spread from the past to the present. I would also like to understand what is the role that "Greenlandic" art can play in building a better relationship and a better understanding between people.

Notice that there is almost no knowledge about Greenland in Italy so the importance of this research is to give a rather simple view on this topic.

Important: You can choose to be anonymous or not and if you can also decide which answers you would like them to be anonymous, which ones you want to answer and which ones instead you prefer to do not answer. You can also choose this at the end of the interview. There are no right or wrong answers, every answer is important for a better understanding of the subject.

I choose not to be anonymous.

1) What do you think about the present relationships between Greenland and Denmark? *Politically I think this is a very interesting period, because the Danish economical interests in Greenland has evolved simultaneously with findings of different minerals, gold, oil, diamonds, rubies etc. Also because of the question on rights to the sea under the north pole, where Denmark already has allocated significantly resources to gathering data etc.*

2) Which are for you the dominant perceptions of the Danes by the Greenlanders and vice versa? *The Greenlandic society and the families is still collectively thinking, but this is changing slowly. Individualism is growing stronger with spin off both in Danish presence with cultural dominance (perceived as higher ranking) and the higher status of the Danish language.*

3) Do you think that these two perceptions are daughters of colonial history? If your answer is yes, can you explain? *Yes, our perception we have of ourselves an each other, is a strong part of the colonial heritage.*

4) How are the stereotypes about the Greenlanders and the Danes carried from the past into the present? *Danish identity is still ranked higher in relation to the Greenlandic. This is more evident today than earlier. It's especially the growing middle class, that identifies themselves after Danish/European norms. They copy both symbols and behavior - the more the better.*

5) For your point of view does it make sense to discuss greenlandic identity or danish identity as two separated ones? *Yes - we're not Danes and vice versa. But after the coalition in the Greenlandic government was formed between IA (the far left) and Demokraterne (the far right and liberalistic), the dialogue about Greenlandic culture and identity has been down prioritized. Now they say that internationalisation is in focus.*

*In my view our culture and how we see our selves, is under change. The majority still see Greenland as a hunter and fishing nation, but this is slowly moving to a more european/industrialized identity. And this will go faster, when some of the big scale industry projects are starting up.*

6) If yes, when and how this separation happened? If not, why? *Well language and culture is and was very different, that's why it's relevant to discuss differences in identity. We have always been considered different countries and cultures. At first Greenland was a colony under Denmark. In 53's Greenland was defined a natural part of Denmark, and that meant big changes in structure, infrastructure etc. up through the 60's and 70's. In 1979 we were granted home rule governance, and in 2009 we got to step two in the further process in being a sovereign state, with The Self Rule.*

7) Is this discourse hazardous (risky) for the majority, who lives between the "two cultures"?

*Well it's not dangerous, but it can be very irritating, because it forces many to look at them selves, their view on others. There have never been a real open and free debate on colonial history and heritage. This is also very difficult to start because most well educated Greenlanders comes from mixed families, and are primarily speaking Danish and have Danish norms and culture as reference.*

8) What is the role of art in the description and especially in the comprehension of people's identities across Greenland and Denmark?

*Well in my view we're talking about two different things. You can use art as a platform to address the issues and the topics. My work is centered about these issues and are not always been viewed upon in a positive manner, to start with. But as it often is with contemporary art, there's a late reaction in certain forums. But there has been no official appreciation of my continues work with these topics.*

9) What is in the future, in that sense, the possible role of art ?

*Well art has had, for the last 50 years, an immense impact on the official work on strengthening our own identity. The previous governments in Greenland has used art and culture to define the differences between Greenland and Denmark.*

10) Which are the limits of today's situation (if there are any) and what could be done to improve the importance of art? *The coming National Gallery of Greenland will in my view give much better grounds for contemporary art and therefore the continues work with relevant topics here in Greenland. My hope is that art and culture will have an equal part to play, along side politics, economy and industry.*

11) Is it possible when we are describing the identities of people across Greenland and Denmark, to speak about a Greenlandic-Danish *metissage*? Or is it reductive?

*(Metissage is synonymous of reinterpretation, contamination, anthropophagy of cultures that shape themselves into a new and inedited (original) form starting from those cultures that were or we considered them to be distinct and homogeneous).*

*In reality it's reductive under the current regime, but as I mentioned earlier there has not been any dialogue about our post colonial situation. Since the late 70's there have been focus on strengthening our culture through indigenous symbols etc. The people living here in Greenland or for that sake the Greenlandic and Danish people is not a homogenous group. There is and has been a very strong polarization, between Danes and Greenlanders, and also between the different groups in Greenland.*

12) Do you consider your works an expression of this *metissage* and how? *No, I see myself as a product of my time and the post colonial situation we're in. My field of work is the post colonial situation. I'm not trying to redefine the area or Greenlandic culture.*

13) (To use one of the main questions asked in the exhibition *Kuuk*): must Inuit art always have a Greenlandic content and what is it this content? *No, but as the situation is right now, there is still a majority (cultural institutions,*

politicians, artists etc.) that think that way. This makes it easier to distinguish art produced out of a Greenlandic context to a Greenlandic art scene. But we're some in the intellectual base, that discuss this. But as always there are a delay in regards to adapt these topics in a broader context.

14) (Again) What is a Greenlandic artist? Well in my view it's a product of how decision makers and others that control funding etc. see things. In my view you can't say, that there's such a thing as a Greenlandic artist - either you are an artist or not.

15) Please tell me something about the importance that the Greenlandic language plays today into the identity and the awareness of the Greenlandic people. Your language defines a great deal your working- and social life, and who you surround yourself with. Your language gives you access to gather and distribute information and mental models. If you can't speak Greenlandic, and you live in Greenland, are you then in contact with what happens here in our country, and in contact with the important topics etc.? And what about your representation in your work - is it the majority or is it a minority?

16) What do you consider to be equality and inequality in today's Greenland? The Danish speaking has still special privileges, in an extent that Greenlandic speaking people don't have. As an example in regards to education Danish speaking has free admittance to education, because the vast majority of educations is teachered in Danish. And the Greenlandic speaking people has to speak Danish to have admittance to the educational system. Således at samfundets forventning om to sprogethed (grønlandsk/dansk) kun gælder for de, i udgangspunktet, grønlandsksprogede.

17) And in Denmark?

Greenlanders is not recognized as being an equal part of Denmark with the same rights etc. If you look on how we are viewed on in comparison to danes, other nationalities in Denmark, we are placed last on the list - Danes in the top. And other nationalities in between.

18) What can "Greenlandic" art do for equality and how? The Greenlandic art scene and the institutions that defines this, has to be more aware of their role, and their view on art and the role of arts. The role of contemporary art also has to be more critical on current issues and topics. We are very far from this at this point. The art scene in Greenland has been used to represent and legitimize our difference from typical the Danish symbols and culture. This is a role I think many in the cultural area have difficulties to free themselves from.

19) How can art help in creating an equal look over people? Art can try to highlight these issues and topics. But it takes time to recognize.

20) Is your art directed to a bi-national (Greenland and Denmark) audience or also to an international? My work is primarily focused on postcolonial issues. And will in that way, naturally be more relevant for other communities that has the same issues/topics.

21) Can you tell me something about the space reserved to Greenlandic art in Denmark? Greenlandic contemporary art has no room on the Danish contemporary art scene. Therefore it is primarily relevant for institutions with relevance to Greenland, and this also is evident in how these are represented, and the actual work being produced.

22) What do you think about the visibility of "Greenlandic" art and Greenland itself in other countries around Europe and outside it? *Most often it is official institutions that does this, and the result is also thereof.*

23) Do you think there is a good communication about it? *The media is not equipped to deal with this, or how they do their reviews - they don't or can't make serious reviews that go more in depth with the works produced. Cultural institutions sense that there's something interesting going on, but lacks understanding for how to communicate this and to allocate resources to it.*

24) What is the reason of a lack of communication (if there is any) about Greenland in Denmark?

*I think you have to understand that we still are in a post colonial realm, and there is many interest at stake. And the topic in it self is difficult to access, because the topic can get very emotional. The Danish government has never recognized any wrong doing, and has never given an apology. And then there's the common view of Danes on Greenlanders - very low status. The media in Denmark tend to focus on problems in Greenland, instead on what works. I think it's the common problem with media coverage - there's no story in telling positive hi/stories - only what doesn't work.*

25) Is art an island? If yes how to turn that island in something different?

*This is a general metaphor, that isn't relevant for my work. I don't see my self or my work as being an island. I interact with the society, and address current issues, in a way that reaches most interested people.*

26) Considering an artist as a metaphor, in the most etymological sense, as meanings' carrier, what are the meanings you are carrying and you intend to carry to Greenland from Denmark and from Greenland to Denmark and also within this shaped boundaries?

*I don't see myself as an artist constrained in any form of boundaries - my work is fluently different in form and expression - it is all about how to reach as many as possible with my work, from project to project. My work field is at this point post colonial issues - and this is what is presented in Greenland, Denmark and other countries.*

27) (if the answer of question 19 was yes) What is the meaning you want to carry to the other countries in Europe and outside? And what is the meaning you're carrying from this countries to Greenland and Denmark?

*See my answer in question 26.*