

Sites and Situations Conference 2019

*Art Event Participant*

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As someone who works between the disciplines of set design and visual arts, I believe public artwork and site-specific installations hold a variety of possibilities for inspiration, influence and critique. I am fascinated by the question of scale, the context of a "non-art" environment, how the work can affect/disrupt the public choreography, how it plays with the dynamics of mundane sites and what materials or visuals can be contrasted with everyday aesthetics.

For my work, I began to consider the element of water, its different states and how one could play with the solid nature of ice. The allocated site would likely be under a bed of snow at that time of year in Finland, so the piece would be interpreted in this context. I enjoy the idea of encasing a space, making you aware of its spatiality and proportions. I have always been obsessed with pools, and what kind of spaces the water occupies and how this is manifested. This is when I came across the frozen structures of Heinz Isler, a Swiss structural engineer. In his paper "New Shapes for Shells", Isler proposed three methods of form-finding – "...the freely shaped hill, the membrane under pressure and the hanging cloth reversed." He created various frozen, ice shells in tent-like shapes just using cotton fabric, water and suspension. I enjoyed the ethereal nature of these works, how they were both solid structures but also fragile, thin and appearing to be floating. I experimented with different designs, how it could affect the movement of the audience and what silhouette the piece could create in the landscape. The compression of the ice and shape of the structure would hold itself up without support, creating space for the audience to explore. When hung, the cotton fabric created organic folds which acted as a visual contrast to its harsh reality and frozen appearance.

During our art walk tour, a line of people was able to enter the installation and view their surroundings, while others observed from outside. Through this large, site specific work, I believe the viewers were given a new appreciation of the formal, shape and volumetric qualities of the commonly known site. It gave me further ideas and I began to think how this piece could function for a longer period of time on a bigger scale, but I question whether the work's power came from its temporality and fleeting nature of the melting ice.

