

MEPs explore Nordic Art



The Other Travel Agency is a Nordic Art project that explores the margins, taking you to environments that otherwise would be unreachable. Artists with learning and intellectual disabilities act as travel guides and take you on a trip to the inner worlds and their own physical surroundings.

A starting point for the project was a simple question: *"Why does no one speak about the silent places you can visit?"* The question was brought up by an artist after observing their own surroundings. The Other Travel Agency gives a voice to the artists, who wants to raise important issues and show personal and meaningful areas of their home city. Rich culture that involves everyone is much more fascinating. It is something that people want to experience from further away as well.

During the summer and the autumn this project has taken place in Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. There have been a series of local art exhibitions and pop up events. A combined show of the local art events will be seen at the European Parliaments gallery in Brussels where you can experience Nordic art, made by artists from outside of the mainstream art world.

*"Difference gives us a possibility to learn and see things in a different way. Its not only disabilities that people has, but also talents. Thats why it is important to show the art and achievements of the artists with intellectual disabilities in European Parliament as well as in whole Europe, says Finnish MEP **Sirpa Pietikäinen**",* who has invited Nordic artists to show their art in European Parliaments gallery.

Conceptual art challenges

Recent reports about megatrends in the travel business say that travellers are more and more interested in richer and deeper experiences. Travellers are seeking real experiences with personal meaning and purpose. Travellers wants to feel the pulse of a place. You can travel in so many different ways.

Photos, animations, videos, paintings. The exhibition in Brussels shows a variety of artistic techniques and styles that the artists have used to explore the theme of travelling. MEPs get to experience a live performance by **Anders Wettler**, an artist working at Swedish Inuti Art Studio, where artists collaborated with a Scottish artist **Mike Inglis** during the Stockholm "The Other Travel Agency" project. One may also visit six Finnish artists through a creative VR documentary *Inside Outside Finland*, produced and made by Donkey Hotel studio & Pertti's Choice in co operation with Autism Foundation Finland, Kettuki and with the support of AVEK (Finnish Promotion Center for Audiovisual Culture).

The curator of the main exhibition is a city activist and producer, **Jaakko Blomberg**. "During the project I have had a chance to get to know a variety of great artists and artworks that deserve higher visibility. There are many ways to travel. To me, The Other Travel Agency has shown me a great many new things that I was unable to see before," says Blomberg.

The Other Travel Agency challenges audiences, politicians and officials to face questions such as 'how visible people with disabilities are in our home city' and 'could their potential be used more'. It shows that artists with disabilities are able to fulfill a great number of roles in the field of art when they have support. The Other Travel Agency creates true cultural diversity. The aim in the long term is to develop accessibility and equality in art, culture and society.

"This is more than art project. This could develop into a movement."

The project is coordinated by Kettuki (FI) in co operation with Kaarisilta ry (FI), Gaia Outsider Art Museum (DE), Inuti (SWE), List án landamæra (IS), Reykjavik Art School (IS), Autism Foundation Finland (FI) and supported by Nordic Culture Point and Nordic Culture Fund. The project has many local partners, e.g. ARX Art Centre, gTIE, Kultasuklaa, Luotsisäätiö, Pertti's Choice, Vinovinkkeli and Visit Randers.

Kettuki is Finland's nationwide studio network for artists foutside the mainstream art world. Kettuki association was founded in 2002. The association consist of artists, art experts, professionals and 23 organizations in the field of art, culture and social services. Kettuki is the founder and coordinator of NOA Nordic Outsider Art network. Kettuki's main goal is equality in art. Kettuki network aims to improve opportunities for people with intellectual and learning disabilities to study and practice art in both professional and recreational contexts.

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