

# THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

A Video Essay on Artscape Nordland and the cultural milieu of the Lofoten Islands

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## Abstract

The Lofoten and adjacent Vesterålen islands are located off the north western coast of Norway inside the Arctic Circle. Despite the islands possessing marine hazards such as the notorious maelstrom caused by the Moskenes tidal stream in the outer islands, Lofoten has been the centre of the Norwegian cod fisheries since the Middle Ages and, in particular, the centre for production of stockfish (dried, salted cod) which has been Norway's most important export product for centuries. The islands are also a place of outstanding and unique natural beauty and were nominated for UNESCO world heritage listing in 2002 by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment on the strength of the "unique qualities associated with its marine resources, geology, plant and animal life, cultural monuments and exciting scenery"<sup>1</sup>. The video essay addresses the latter aspects, looking at a series of public artworks in the landscape and featuring interviews with key figures within the thriving cultural milieu of the Lofoten islands.

## Keywords

Lofoten, Public Art, Landscape

The video was recorded in the summer of 2007 at several locations in the Lofoten islands. Through trade and fishing, Lofoten has always been well-connected to other parts of the world. In the 21st Century, the traditional fishing industry has been supplemented by tourism, which plays an increasingly significant role in the economy of the islands. Alongside the growth of tourism there has been a strong emphasis on the development of an active contemporary cultural programme. Through its large-scale public art project 'Artscape Nordland'<sup>2</sup>, the county of Nordland, in which Lofoten is located, brought a range of renowned international artists to northern Norway to create site-specific works in the landscape (see Jaukkuri, 1999 [ed]). Two of these sculptural works are key elements in the video: Dan Graham's glass and steel pavilion at Lyngvær, a former ferry terminal, and Markus Raetz's 'Head', which is situated on the beach near the village of Eggum, facing the Arctic Ocean.

The video includes two interviews; one with Rickard Borgström, director of The Lofoten International Art Festival (LIAF), and the other with Siri Kvitvik, head of the Nordlands Art and Film School. Both have actively contributed to the emergence of an



Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> See the summary submission archived online at the UNESCO website-  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1751/> - accessed October 2008.

<sup>2</sup> See the Artscape Nordland website for visual documentation -  
<http://www.skulpturlandskap.no/Skulpturlandskap/artscape/artworks.html> -  
accessed October 2008.

Bibliography:

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