



SOMETHING STRANGE

NERISSUAQ

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Pullo-Erkki



On visiting Tornio I was fascinated by the number of elderly people I saw trundling slowly around the town centre on strange scooter style vehicles, like zimmer frames on wheels. Wire framed shopping baskets were fitted to some handlebars and from others dangled plastic carrier bags full of provisions.

One day, outside the supermarket, I saw one of these vehicles completely enveloped by bulging carrier bags. It was a mad strange sculpture and I wondered who was responsible.

I asked my Finnish hosts what the name of this type of vehicle was and they told me it was a Rollaattori.

Whilst discussing the sale and consumption of alcohol in Finland, my Finnish friend told me of plans for a government ban on drinking in public places. This of course would reduce littering caused by discarded cans and bottles. "Only one person gains from this," she told me "and that's Bottle Eric". "Who is bottle Eric?" I asked. "He is an old man who goes around town gathering up all the cans and bottles for recycling". "Does he have a rollaattori" I asked, "completely covered with stuffed plastic bags?"

Apparently 'Bottle Eric' (Pullo-Erkki) is something of a local hero. I was fascinated by this man, his mission and his enterprise. Bottle Eric and his resplendent polythene chariot seemed to encapsulate certain characteristics of Tornio.

Tornio is close to the Arctic Circle, which symbolises a line between comfortable human habitation and a more elemental existence. Tornio is a gateway to wilderness adventure and the remnants of the traditional life style of the Sami people in the harsh climate of Lapland. The road South is one preferred by the younger population eager for the attractions of city life and the promises of consumerism.

Although what lies North might be bleak and forbidding, it is also relatively unaffected by human spoilage. Bottle Eric is an elderly caretaker, painstakingly tidying the messy edges of the tundra, literally and symbolically keeping at bay the rising ring of pollution which is working its way further North.

For this exhibition at The Aine Art Museum I wish to make a sculpture which reflects aspects of Tornio and is a tribute to Bottle Eric.

