# ‘Arke-Typical’: Dialogues in Art, Anthropology and the Writing of Self in the Work of Pia Arke

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## Abstract

‘Arke-Typical’: Dialogues in Art, Anthropology and the Writing of Self in the Work of Pia Arke

This research project approaches the topic of autoethnography in art through an analysis of the artistic practice of the late Greenlandic-Inuit and Danish artist and photographer, Pia Arke (1958-2007). Arke’s artistic-research practice is a personal and critical relationship to Greenland’s colonial history, Danish imperialism and Arctic Indigenous representation. Her critiques are foregrounded in biographical expressions and critical reflections that reframe colonial histories and narratives, bringing them into visible and tangible contact with Greenlandic Inuit oral and material histories. Pia Arke’s writing and performances challenge dominant discourses of the ‘ethnographic turn’ by art scholars concerned with issues such as, appropriation in art, ‘relational aesthetics’, social collaboration and site-specificity; themes that, although relevant, tend to obscure important decolonizing methods and postcolonial insights in the art historical literature. Pia Arke’s autoethnographic framings foreground notions of identity, ethnicity, hybridity, and self-representation as crucial postcolonial sites in formation. Arke’s artistic devices, mediums and narrative contents draw on the history of ethnographic histories as she explores critical colonial and postcolonial themes. This critical stance is an integral part of the project in which she seeks to interrogate and thus requalify the “ethnographic gaze,” imbuing it with new meaning. Arke’s performative gestures produced new visual configurations and representations that can be read and understood as plurally embodied autoethnographic articulations in reclaiming (self) identity. Her mixed “mongrel” autoethnographic orientations, especially as clarified in her practice, are largely informed by the multivalency of ethnoaesthetics, as a web of meanings and contestations deriving from ethnographic practices, issues of race and identity, postcoloniality, and the politics of indigeneity. Her theoretical outlook is thus meaningfully extended into different intellectual fields, especially as they are closely linked with praxis—this linkage is indispensable in constructing and narrating an essential autoethnographic project.

*Keywords*: Greenland, Arctic colonialism, decolonization, postcoloniality, critical theory, methodologies, ethnicity, identity, autoethnography, artistic-research, ethnographic turn, ethnoaesthetics

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*In autobiographical narrative performances, the performer often speaks about acts of social transgression. In doing so, the telling of the story itself becomes a transgressive act—a revealing of what has been kept hidden, a speaking of what has been silenced—an act of reverse discourse that struggles with the preconceptions borne in the air of dominant politics.* —Linda Park-Fuller (2000, p. 26)

***Introduction – Literature Review & Project***

My research topic analyzes the methodological and ethnographic approaches "borrowed" from the social sciences and humanities that are present in artworks by the late Greenlandic-Inuit and Danish contemporary visual artist and photographer, Pia Arke (1958-2007) *(fig.1).* One of the first artists to foreground the postcolonial situation in Greenland, Arke's writings, visual performances, and related praxis are a personal and critical response to Greenland's colonial past, Danish imperialism, and Arctic Indigenous representations. Through performance, video, photography, text and installation, she worked within ideologies and structures of representation in order to re-write and re-frame colonial histories and narratives, bringing them into visible and tangible contact with Greenlandic Inuit oral and material histories. Specifically, her artistic devices, mediums and narratives draw on the history of ethnographic theories and practices as she explores critical colonial and postcolonial themes. This critical stance is integral to her artistic project, which seeks to interrogate and thus requalify the "ethnographic gaze," imbuing it with new meaning. Pia Arke's performative gestures produced new visual configurations and representations that can interpreted as embodied autoethnographic[1] articulations; they represent an eloquent way of reclaiming (self) identity. Pia Arke's "mongrel" (mixed) autoethnographic orientations, as manifest in her practice, are largely informed by the multivalency of ethnoaesthetics, as a web of meanings and contestations deriving from ethnographic practices, issues of race and identity, postcoloniality, and the politics of indigeneity. Her theoretical outlook is thus meaningfully extended into different intellectual fields, especially as they are closely linked with praxis—this linkage is indispensable in constructing and narrating an essential autoethnographic project.

[1]In the context of performance, Tami Spry defines autoethnographic performance as, "…the convergence of the 'autobiographic impulse' and the 'ethnographic moment' represented through movement and critical self-reflexive discourse in performance, articulating the intersections of peoples and culture through the innersanctions of the always migratory identity." See Tami Spry, "Performing Autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis." *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 6 (2001): 706-732.

Pia Selskabit Arke (née Gant) was born on September 1, 1958 in Uunartaq (Cape Tobin) near Ittoqqortoormiitt (Scoresbysund) in Northeast Greenland to an Inuit mother, Justine Piparajik Birgitte, and a Danish father, Jørgen Gant. Throughout her childhood she traveled between South and West Greenland and Denmark, the result of her father's work as a telegraphist for the Danish government. At the age of thirteen, she attended primary school in Denmark and learned to speak Danish while the rest of her family returned to Greenland. As a consequence of her early travels, which exposed her to many dialects, Arke was not able to speak the Greenlandic language. After reuniting briefly with her family in Nuuk, West Greenland, Arke returned to Denmark in 1976 to attend high school. In 1987, she settled in Copenhagen—coincidentally, at a time when other Greenlandic artists were relocating to Denmark for arts education—to study painting at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. In 1993 she entered the Department of Theory and Communications at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, where she studied under Professor Carsten Juhl.[2] During this time she developed an interest in Postcolonial Theory and the Greenlandic colonial history. She graduated with an MFA in 1995 with a published thesis titled, *Ethno-Aesthetics*[3], an essay that evolves into a critically refined artistic-research practice.

***Literature Review***

The relationship between ethnography—critical ethnography, in particular—and art practice has become more interactive and mutually repositioned, since the early twentieth century. The word ethnography (from the Latin 'ethnos' meaning "people" or "folk"; and 'graph', something "written" or represented") refers to the branch of sociocultural anthropology as a systematic study, writing and representation of a particular culture or society.[4] More fundamental though, ethnography is a system of observation that offers a *writing* or a *body of knowledge* on an object of study.

[2]Juhl has written a few essays on her work, two of which are included in the monograph, *TUPILAKOSAURUS*. See Carsten Juhl, "Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonization, and Mapping," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 277; "Visual Art and Monolingualism: The Cleverness of Pia Arke: Fragments from an Experience of Mestization," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 323-28.

[3] This essay was originally written in Danish and subsequently published by the Danish art magazine, ARK. See Pia Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics / Ethnoæstetik", in *ARK*, Aarhus no. 17, (1995). In 2010 it was republished in a trilingual [English, Greenlandic (Kalatdlisut), and Danish] second edition (out of print) to accompany the retrospective exhibition: See Kunsttidsskriftet ARK, Pia Arke Selskabet, and Kuratorisk Aktion, *Ethno-Aesthetics / Ethnoæstetik*, Copenhagen, 2010. The version is included in a monograph produced after a retrospective exhibition of her work: Pia Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", in *TUPILAKOSAURUS: Pia Arke's Issue with Art, Ethnicity, and Colonialism*, 1981-2006, Kuratorisk Aktion, editors, (Copenhagen: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2012), 340.

[4] As a disciplinary field method, particular emphasis is made toward participant-observation in analyzing societal structure and organization, kinship, rituals, mythology, religion, and processes of transcultural exchange.

Postmodern critical writings produced in the eighties and nineties converged on a *crisis of representation* arising out of a set of criticisms regarding the limitations of cross-cultural representation, the politics of identity, and the role of anthropology in the legacies of colonialism.[5] From this, the process of decolonizing anthropology within the social sciences, arts, and humanities began which turned towards self-reflexivity and experimental forms of writing culture. Critical ethnographies followed the crisis of representation focusing on repressed histories and peoples, and the imbalance of power in cultural representation.

Within the past few decades, the 'ethnographic turn' in contemporary art discourse has re-emerged for the first time, since early 20th century Surrealist ethnography; a broad definition of ethnography has been adopted, producing works that employ the methodologies and concerns of anthropologists.[6] Art historian, James Clifford spearheaded new definitions of ethnography, and is credited with having brought ethnography into a much wider field of practices. Challenging its exclusivity within the domain of academic anthropology, Clifford defines ethnography as a "hybrid activity…as writing, as collecting, as modernist collage, as imperial power, as subversive critique."[7] The move towards art-as-ethnography (i.e., art as relations, process), and ethnographic representations in art closely parallel both an overall 'performative turn' and 'sensory (materialist)

[5] Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy, *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[6] A main issue lies in conflicting interpretations of what is "ethnographic", and the credibility of aesthetics as a research practice in anthropology. This turn in the discourse that interrelates ethnography and art practice, continues to interest scholars mainly in the field of visual culture studies who are primarily invested in new practices of representation that contemporary art has influenced, and that are central to the discipline. Visual anthropologists, for example, have recently turned to contemporary art to help establish new aesthetic (and poetic) approaches, as well as forms of embodied research to ethnographic visual representation. A common focus on fieldwork and cross-fertilizing practices in the anthropological literature emphasizes the symbiotic nature of ethnography, site-specificity, and the 'politics of collaboration' and participation. In both fields today, the turn is a mode of critical engagement on the nature of representation, yet is rife with 'interdisciplinary anxiety' over the aesthetics, ethics, possibilities, and boundaries of the movement. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, Cambridge, (MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Hal, Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996. Coles, Alex, and Alexia Defert, *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity*, London, UK: BACKless Books in association with Black Dog, 1998; Arnd Schneider, and Christopher Wright, eds. *Anthropology and Art practice*, London; New York: A&C Black, 2013; Alex Coles, Editor, *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, (pp. 74-91) Volume 4, London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 2000; Fiona Siegenthaler, "Towards an ethnographic turn in contemporary art scholarship," Critical Arts 27, no. 6 (2013): 737-752; Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, "The Ethnographic Turn - and After: A critical approach towards the realignment of art and anthropology," in *Social Anthropology*, November 2015, 23(4): 418-434.

[7] His definition collapsed the division between the avant-garde art and science of ethnography to challenge ethnographic authority; disciplinary conventions and methods that allowed it to remain an autonomous field. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 13; Grimshaw and Ravetz, The Ethnographic Turn-and After," 420-1.

turn' in anthropological practices.[8] Both turns correspond to a larger postmodern project aimed at encounters in ethnography between Self and Other; tackling issues of fixed representation with a focus on epistemology, materials, process, embodiment, and the senses in representational practices.[9] Employing visual media (film, photography, performance), contemporary artists informed by anthropological methods are directed towards shared practices of 'doing'/making ethnography through fieldwork, community-based projects, artistic-research into archives and museum collections.[10] A main objective is to illuminate the social, historical, and political implications of representation, as they relate to structures and institutions of power. Contemporary artists, such as Pia Arke, are engaging in critical postcolonial themes, the history and practice of ethnography, and performance; they have turned to the colonial archive and collections as mediating, discursive, and contested sites for the reclaiming and refashioning of identities, histories, and cultural narratives.[11] Establishing autoethnographic approaches through the work of Pia Arke, therefore serves to nuance dominant discourses of the 'ethnographic turn' by scholars concerned with issues such as, for example, disciplinary integrity, appropriation in art, collaborative practices, and site-specificity; themes that, although relevant, tend to obscure the generative and transformative spaces of decolonizing methods as embodied practice and the role of postcolonial theory in the art historical literature.[12]

The practice of writing or representing culture and the self is a very complex topic across the disciplines. Autoethnography, defined broadly as a type of self-reflexive writing that narrates culture through a personal lens, arose out of discourses in identity politics across the disciplines. In the art historical literature, Hal Foster (1955-) cautioned against the ethnographic movement by contemporary artists, as "pseudo-ethnography", or a "turn to the referent", where "artist-as-

[8] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media, and Representation in Research*. London: Sage, 2001; Kris, Rutten, A. van. Dienderen, and Ronald Soetaert. "Revisiting the ethnographic turn in contemporary art." *Critical Arts* 27, no. 5 (2013): 459-473.

[9] The notion of evocation in art and visual media has been developed in discourses in visual anthropology, and refers to the primacy given to experience, emotions, and subjectivities in art/ethnography. A performative ethnography emerged from discussions on the crisis of representation in postmodern critical thought and in consideration of new modes of ethnographic representation. See Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright, *Between Art and Anthropology: Contemporary Ethnographic Practice*, (Oxford and New York: Berg Press, 2010), 1-21.

[10] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media, and Representation in Research*, London: Sage, 2001.

[11] Similar artists taking on the issues of identity, history, and systems of representation include

[12] Alex Coles, Editor, *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, (pp. 74-91) Volume 4, London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 2000; Fiona Siegenthaler, "Towards an ethnographic turn in contemporary art scholarship," Critical Arts 27, no. 6 (2013): 737-752; *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996.

ethnographers" socially represent site-specific identities and communities. Foster characterizes the turn as a case of *ethnographic self-fashioning*; a cultural politics of alterity where the Other is appropriated for the interests of art.[13] In postcolonial studies, however, autoethnography has been discussed as a self-representational method for critically addressing postcolonial relations; for resisting, re-inscribing, and destabilizing dominant narratives imbuing a sense of cultural agency to the voices of Indigenous peoples.[14] Autoethnography's postmodern use, however, as Pia Arke's works demonstrate, takes the form of a writing and performance for calling into question the contested "objective observer" in ethnographic/artistic practices, and the idea of a singular self in plural realities.[15] Mary Louise Pratt first coined *autoethnography* in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, distinguishing it from a traditional autobiography, to define a type of critical ethnography carried out on one's own culture that reflects transcultural behaviours and choices as a result of colonial contact.[16] It was later interpreted by James Clifford as a form of ethnographic self-fashioning (i.e., shaping one's identity) to challenge representational authority. Clifford adopts Pratt's definition of autoethnography: "…the ways colonized people portray themselves using a mix of imported and indigenous terms, symbols, and genres, reinventing their cultures through critical engagement with external representation".[17] Through this framework, Pia Arke's writings and performances challenge Foster's concept of ethnographic self-fashioning demonstrating a theoretical alignment with Pratt, Clifford, and Bhabha, evidenced by an emphasis

[13] Foster argues that, in this self-fashioning capacity, artists assume the role of ethnographer but also risk taking on the role of native informant (i.e., one complicit in the writing of culture) in traditional sociocultural ethnography. This is a major point that will require further research, especially as it relates to self fashioning of identity. See Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996.147.

[14] Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhuwai Smith, editors, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore: Sage, 2008; Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*, Oxford: Berg, 1997.

[15] Deborah Reed-Danahay, Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social, Oxford: Berg, 1997.

[16] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 1988. Reed-Danahay, Deborah, *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*, Oxford: Berg, 1997.

[17] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 9. As it exists across a spectrum of cultural practices today, autoethnography is employed by many types of researchers (including indigenous and non-indigenous artist-researchers) as a mode of representing and narrating the self/selves and subjective experience, as they relate to larger social, cultural, and political systems. See Tony Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, Autoethnography, London: Oxford University Press, 2015. Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhuwai Smith, Editors. *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore: Sage, 2008; Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*, Oxford: Berg, 1997; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

on notions of *transculturation* and *hybridity* (to be discussed), as themes that allow the artist to formulate her own postcolonial critiques ultimately to reclaim identity, and return voice and agency.

***Autoethnography as Decolonial Art Practice***

My theoretical outlook turns to autoethnography as a decolonizing methodology and analytical framework as expressed through Arke's artistic-research practice. Specifically, I analyze autoethnographic approaches, as they intersect with the larger, 'ethnographic turn'.[18] It is indebted to the cooperation of several fields and disciplines which include Art & Aesthetics, Visual Anthropology, Performance, Postcolonial and Indigenous studies. This thesis addresses the performative qualities and transformative potential of autoethnographic approaches in art, as a mode of critical inquiry and artistic production that often incorporates an individual's writing, experience, body, and emotions.[19] This important component of ethnography in art significantly, corresponds to a range of decolonial art practices relating to postcolonial identity formation. A main argument is that autoethnography in this context foregrounds notions of identity, ethnicity, hybridity, and self-representation as crucial postcolonial sites in formation. Arke's work demonstrates that autoethnography is not merely *ethnographic self-fashioning*, as the art historical literature on 'the turn' suggests, but a living, "messy"[20] archive of embodied narratives, experiences, histories, identities that are continually negotiated.

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[18] James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, Cambridge, (MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Alex Coles, editor, *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, (pp. 74-91) Volume 4, London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 2000; Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996. Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, "The ethnographic turn–and after: a critical approach towards the realignment of art and anthropology," in *Social Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (2015): 418-434; Kris Rutten, van. Dienderen, and Ronald Soetaert. "Revisiting the ethnographic turn in contemporary art." *Critical Arts* 27, no. 5 (2013): 459-473.

[19] Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, *Autoethnography*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2015); Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhuwai Smith, editors, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, (Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore: Sage,2008); Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*, (Oxford: Berg, 1997); Tami Spry, "Performing Autoethnography: An embodied methodological praxis," in *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 6 (2001): 706-732.

[20] In the context of reformulating social science research methods and modes of ethnography, sociologist John Law states, "Over the last two decades methods for the analysis of visual materials, performance approaches, and an understanding of methods as poetics or interventionary narrative have all become important." He advocates a theory of methodological assemblage or "mess" which understands the production of knowledge and social reality are built up as a set of entangled, complex contingencies and practices. Methods are inherently political in that they do not merely describe or document social realities, but they have the capacity to generate, reimagine, and redirect them. This messiness derives from the spatial entanglements within and between the multiple art (social) worlds of identity politics, institutions, histories, aesthetics, and materialities, and intentions. See John Law, *After method: Mess in social science research*, (Routledge, 2004); Howard Becker, *Art worlds*, (University of California Press, 1984);

Although Pia Arke is not well-known internationally, she is a beloved individual in Denmark, whose legacy stands as one of the first artists to expose the suppressed colonial history of Greenland. A large-scale retrospective exhibition of her work titled, *Tupilakosaurus: Pia Arke's Issue with Art, Ethnicity, and Colonialism, 1981-2006*, commemorated the artist after her death. Led by the female art collective, formerly known as Kuratorisk Aktion, the exhibition was accompanied by the publication of a large monograph featuring a majority of Arke's work titled, *Tupilakosaurus: An Incomplete(able)Survey of Pia Arke's Artistic Work and Research*, which serves as an exhibition catalogue. It also includes archival documentation, personal notes, and a survey of her artistic-research practice.[21] The prior research on Pia Arke (in English) is mostly contained in the book, and focuses primarily on postcolonial dynamics, the Indigenous body, cultural memory and belonging—important themes which I build on in this thesis.[22] This thesis builds upon the prior research, by including closer discussions on the relationship between art and ethnography, the autoethnographic and symbolic articulations of her practice, and the Inuit perspectives and methods that also influence her work. Arke's project demonstrates that autoethnography is not merely a decolonizing method in "researching back" but a crucial site for identity formation. They also lend interesting insight into the ways the visual vernacular of ethnography makes meaning in particular contexts. Ultimately, I'm interested in developing the prior scholarship on Pia Arke, building on notions of narratives, text, performance and decolonizing methodologies that situate her along a lineage of Greenlandic Inuit artistic tradition.

The body of this thesis is divided into two primary chapters: The first chapter focuses on text and narratives. It takes as a point of departure, Pia Arke's graduate thesis titled, *Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995), a personal and critical essay that addresses the ethnographic romanticisation of Greenlandic Inuit Art and issues of representational authority that Arke uses to form a postcolonial critique. The chapter draws connections between Arke's own writings that outline an ethnic condition, ethnographic representations, and a history of Greenlandic writings and narratives. The

[21] This large, yellow book has been instrumental in my own understandings of Pia Arke's incredible legacy and artistic practice. Frederikke Hansen and Tone Olaf Nielsen (Kuratorisk Aktion), editors, *TUPILAKOSAURUS: An Incomplete (able) Survey of Pia Arke's Artistic Work and Research*, Copenhagen: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010.

[22] Erik Gant, 'The "Arke" Typical/Pia Arke,' Katalog, Museet for fotofunst: Odense, Denmark. 8(3): 14-17; Stefan Jonsson, "Performing Postcoloniality: Pia Arke's Disclosure of the Global Order." In Tupilakosaurus: An Incomplete (able) Survey of Pia Arke's Artistic Work and Research. Copenhagen: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010; Kirsten Thisted, "De-framing the Indigenous Body. Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke." In *TUPILAKOSAURUS: An Incomplete(able) Survey of Pia Arke's Artistic Work and Research*, Copenhagen: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010.

chapter demonstrates how Arke re-appropriated of the field of ethnoaesthetics, the Western study of non-Western art, as a decolonizing methodology. Collapsing binary divisions lies at the root of her postcolonial critiques. Arke uses ethnoaesthetics, as a web of meanings and cultural practices, offering its re-reading as a postcolonial 'contact zone'[23]—her mongrel, 'Arke-typical' methodology and autoethnographic framework.

The second chapter takes the topic of performance, and Arke's positioning of her own body in discursive relation to image, text, and land. Arke's performances and research practice were developed from some of the theoretical issues raised in *Ethno-Aesthetics*. Exploring Arke's performance-based works in photography, video, installation, and text, this chapter traces how her artistic devices, mediums and narrative contents draw on the history and visual language of ethnography to explore critical colonial themes. It begins by demonstrating Arke's embodied relationship to Greenland and place, as a personal, critical exercise in her explorations of the camera and with photography as a representational medium. From there, her early explorations of pinhole photography become the surface for some of her performance works in the medium. Through the raw artistic "materials" of body, discourse, and cultural artefact, Arke reclaims Greenlandic oral and material histories. They are elements that are integral to her autoethnographic practice and project of dismantling institutions that support an Ethnographic Gaze. Her performances in text, installation, and video allow her to physically engage in the process of image-making—highlighting the 'messy' entanglements and complex contact between subjects and objects in representational practices—to ultimately, reclaim identity.

[23] Pratt, "Introduction: Criticism in the Contact Zone," 7-9.

## Chapter 1
## *[NARRATIVES] Ethnoaesthetics, A 'Mongrel' Methodology*

Texts and narratives have played a significant role in shaping Greenland's colonial history, collective memory, and imagined past. Pia Arke's compelling essay, *Ethno-Aesthetics / Ethnoæstetik*[24] (1995) is a meaningful contribution to a larger historical tradition of Greenlandic writing and literary production. It also signals a turning point in her career towards artistic-research practice informed by ethnographic methods and postcolonial theory. This essay is the artist's graduate thesis from the Department of Theory and Communication at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, Denmark. It presents theoretical and philosophical reflections on postcolonial issues relating to identity, ethnicity, authenticity, and master narratives in art. Through an analysis of different historical texts, she demonstrates how subjects are entangled in cultural representations, significations, and intentions. Her engagement with ethnoaesthetics is a significant dialectic across her practice that interrogates the construction of the ethnic and postcolonial subject, from an in-between perspective. Its language foregrounds the tension between lived experience and objectification. Importantly, the inquiries and thematics raised in her essay become the theoretical platform for Arke's reformulations in her own practice. These reconstitutions come to fruition in her visual performances and artworks.

Arke reappropriates the field of ethnoaesthetics—the study of non-Western art, broadly[25]—as a method and critical apparatus to deconstruct Western colonial ideology, and re-examine the limitations of postcolonial theory. In her essay, the artist indicates that she preferred the use of the term "ethnoaesthetics" over "postcolonialism"[26]; what she perceived as corresponding terms that outline a particular postcolonial condition. Specifically, Arke reckoned that postcolonial "theory" at the time did not account for the reciprocity and complexity of psychological desires and processes of transculturation that underscore the range of (post)colonial

[24] This essay was originally written in Danish and subsequently published by the Danish art magazine, *ARK*. See Pia Arke, *Ethno-Aesthetics / Ethnoæstetik*, in ARK, Aarhus no. 17, (1995). In 2010 it was republished in a trilingual [English, Greenlandic (Kalatdlisut), and Danish] second edition (out of print) to accompany the exhibition *TUPILAKOSAURUS: Pia Arke's Issue with Art, Ethnicity, and Colonialism*, 1981-2006. See Kunsttidsskriftet ARK, Pia Arke Selskabet, and Kuratorisk Aktion, Ethno-Aesthetics / Ethnoæstetik, Copenhagen, 2010.
[25] See J.C. Philip Dark, "The study of ethno-aesthetics: The Visual Arts," in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts* (1967): 131-148. See also Wilfried Van Damme, *Beauty in Context: Towards an anthropological approach to aesthetics*, (Leiden, New York, Köhln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1-57.
[26] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 336.

*experiences*—a discussion that will be returned to in more detail below. As previously mentioned, Pia Arke uses ethnoaesthetics as a platform to build a *mongrel*[27] (discussed below) methodology and autoethnographic framework to reclaim identity. This chapter will explain Pia Arke's essay in terms of: (1) Arke's relationship to ethnography, particularly, the traditional use of ethnoaesthetics in anthropological field study, as distinguished from her repurposing of the concept, (2) how she contrasts postcolonialism and ethnoaesthetics and (3) how her reformulation of ethnoaesthetics responds to what she perceives as the failings of postcolonialism, as well as some of the critical intersecting issues of race, ethnicity, identity, and collective memory she underscores through her artistic practice. This chapter will first situate *Ethno-Aesthetics*[28] in the historiographical and critical context of its production, in light of a cultural history of Greenlandic writings and literary traditions. Finally, I will highlight the implications of critical autoethnography in art practice, not only in Pia Arke's work, but as it relates to methods and processes of decolonization within the broader 'ethnographic turn' in contemporary art discourse.

*Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995) appears in the form of a red, pamphlet-sized book with 31 pages measuring 21 x 17 cm *(fig. 2).* The essay was originally published in Danish by the art journal *ARK*[29]*,* based out of Aarhaus, Denmark. A total of five-hundred copies of the original Danish edition were printed and, notably, the only issue of *ARK* to ever completely sell out.[30] The author of the Foreword to the 2nd edition of *Ethno-Aesthetics* (2009), Lars Kiel Bertelsen remarks that the essay was a success because it was one of the first public attempts at addressing the unsettling questions of Denmark's past and present colonial histories in Greenland from an artistic perspective.[31] The structure and contents of Arke's essay are divided into five numbered sections respectively titled, 1) *Dagens Nyheter,* 2) *Eskimo Art,* 3) *James Clifford,* 4) *Dagens Nyheter*

[27] Throughout the paper, the term *mongrel* is used with hesitation given the implications of the term. Although Arke self-identifies with the concept, I use it primarily to indicate her subject positioning or to emphasize the mixed, hybrid elements and conceptualizations in her work and practice.

[28] It is important to note here that I am not so much concerned with speculating as to whether or not *Ethno-Aesthetics* was intended as an artistic project or art object than I am about uncovering the ways it has greatly informed the conceptual and ideological directions of her later visual works.

[29] It should be mentioned that the title of the journal and Arke's name is coincidental, although the editors of the journal mention their amusement at the similarity. See Bertelsen, "The Alien Element at Play is Ourselves," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 260.

[30] As indicated by Lars Kiel Bertelsen, Co-Editor of the art journal, *ARK* since 1994, Associate Professor and Director of Studies at the Institute for Communication and Culture, Aarhus University (Denmark), founder of The Collection of Anonymous Photographic Material, and close personal friend of Pia Arke, in an email exchange on Sunday, 6 March, 2016. Today there exist very few copies of the original text,

[31] As stated by Lars in the email exchange on Sunday, 6 March, 2016.

*Revisited,* and 5) *Interpretations.* Each section focuses on a particular text or body of texts produced at different times; the first section introduces a series of newspaper articles on postcolonial topics printed in 1995 by *Dagens Nyheter,* a Swedish daily newspaper; the second section covers key historical moments in the history of "Eskimo" (Inuit) Art with examples including the modernist ethnographic book *Eskimo* by Edmund Carpenter, Frederick Varley and Robert Flaherty (1964), Robert Flaherty's colonial-era film *Nanook of the North* (1922), and Bodil Kaalund's, *The Art of Greenland* (1990); the third section reflects on James Clifford's book, *The Predicament of Culture*, specifically his chapter, "On Ethnographic Surrealism" (1988) and the Surrealist periodical, *Documents,* edited by Georges Batailles (1920s). The fourth section examines the relationship between the textual content of the Dagens Nyheter articles and Arke's photographic images; and the final section is a critical response to postcolonialism and ethnoaesthetics correlated with the dominant practices in "Western appropriation and marginalization [of Indigenous cultures]"[32]. The 1st edition of *Ethno-Aesthetics* also contains a foreword by Pia Arke's brother, Erik Gant, who prefaces Arke's relationship to the 'mongrel' concept with respect to issues of ethnicity and identity.[33] Collectively, the sections draw thematic linkages between Arctic Indigenous representations, ethnic and postcolonial identities, and issues surrounding the interpretation of art. The result is a persuasively argued text that invites a deeper reflection on the issues of representation and interpretation in art, as well as on Arke's own methodologies.

### *Re-Reading Binaries*

Before turning to *Ethno-Aesthetics*, it is worth describing the cultural and intellectual climate of the time to more fully contextualize Pia Arke's methodological choices and the historical impact of her practice. A careful reading of Pia Arke's essay reveals strands of postcolonial thought that inflect her practice. Postcolonial theory formed out of a larger *crisis of representation* that affected the social sciences, humanities, and the arts with critical epistemological inquiry.[34] The crisis

[32] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", 343.
[33] Kuratorisk Aktion (Frederikke Hansen & Tone Olaf Nielsen), "Pia Arke", in *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism: A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts*, (Helsinki, Finland: Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art, 2006), 122.
[34] The 'crisis of representation' arose as a set of criticisms regarding the limitations of cross-cultural representations, uncertainty in the documentation of social reality, lack of discussion around women's social and cultural practices, and the accountability of Anthropology in the legacies of colonialism. See, George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fisher,

produced counter-discourses that sought to, ultimately, deconstruct Western meta-narratives and subvert cultural hegemony.[35] Edward Said's foundational postcolonial text, *Orientalism* (1978, 1991), was influential to later scholars for its interrogation of imperialism through dominant structures of knowledge and power. His book was studied intensively by other postcolonial critics such as, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Mary Louise Pratt, et al., who, in the nineties challenged some theoretical implications that his text raised.[36] The main challenge to Said's text rested chiefly on problematic binary forms (e.g., East-West, colonizer-colonized, centre-periphery) which universalized diverse histories, temporalities and cultural identities.[37] It obscured local, hybrid processes and strategies of resistance within dominant Western narratives.[38] A focus on binaries, ultimately, denied the ongoing cultural exchanges and the complex ambivalence that also determines postcolonial relations.[39] 'Post-Said' literature, therefore, is characterized by a shift from exposing imperialism to postcolonial agency. It emphasizes the experiences of the colonized subject informed by representational studies in ethnicity, indigeneity, gendered and plural identities.[40] Consequently, theories of cultural *hybridity* were enthusiastically embraced in the 1990s. In outlining the structures of a colonial ambivalence in text and discourse, Homi Bhabha emphasized the interrelations between cultures in destabilizing imperial authority. Bhabha's instrumental theory of cultural *hybridity*, for example, challenged the essentialist discourses of the

"A Crisis of Representation in the Human Sciences" in *Readings for a History Anthropological Theory*, Erickson, Paul A., and Liam Donat Murphy, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 806-818.

[35] Ibid.

[36] The postcolonial criticism that emerged following Said's text broadly addressed the depoliticized and dichotomizing historical and theoretical implications of Said's text with respect to cultural identities, ethnicities, feminisms, nationalisms, and processes of globalization. In more recent years, postcolonial theory is characterized by a more dynamic, processual field and methodological flexibility particularly as it intersects with Indigenous histories and perspectives, as well as critical race/gender studies. For a general overview of postcolonial theory and criticism, see Edward Said, "Introduction," *Orientalism,* (London, Penguin, 1978): 1-28; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth and Helen Tiffen, 'General Introduction,' *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (London and New York: Routeledge, 1995:1-4); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York, Routledge, 1994).

[37] This criticism also included interrogations of the post- in 'post-colonial'; its de-politicized implications, and the replication of colonial/imperial structures in the contexts of nationalism, globalization, and capitalism. See Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, "General Introduction," 3-6; Stuart Hall, "When was 'The Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, eds, Iain Chambers and Lidia Curtis, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 242-60. See also, Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), esp. Chapter 4 titled, "Edward Said and His Critics," pp. 64-80.

[38] Ashcroft, 'General Introduction,' 3.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998
For additional sources on these topics see, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Williams, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London: Routledge, 1989.

Other by making space for 'in-between' postcolonial subjectivities and identities. Defined as the transcultural exchanges (e.g., languages, symbolic practices) between the colonized and colonizer cultures, it was used to resist notions of cultural or racial purity and essentialist categories.[41]As will be seen, a primary objective in Pia Arke's project was to collapse binary forms. She re-reads them as ongoing processes in transculturation that undermine the imbalance of power in cultural representation.[42] Importantly, Arke's autoethnographic expressions foreground Inuit experiences and narratives. These postcolonial themes were part of the intellectual climate at the time of Arke's essay, and they reveal the impact of critical theory on her text and methods, and practice.

### *Ethnic Narratives – Greenlandic Literature*

The representational crisis holds historical and symbolic weight for Arke's practice since knowledge of Greenland was built up primarily through representations by non-Greenlanders. Furthermore, binary structures and essentialist discourse (e.g., Greenlandic vs non-Greenlandic; European vs Indigenous, etc.) only echoed the problematic cultural and ethnic divisions that had a profound impact on these local postcolonial relations during Arke's career. In the Greenland-Denmark region, the postcolonial context is characterized by asymmetrical power relations. To start, Greenland was for a long time politically represented by Danes.[43] Prior to the implementation

[41] The term, however, has been rejected by Indigenous peoples and scholars who contest the simplistic notion of mixed (i.e., partitive) cultures/identities, in that it theoretically reinscribes binaries, and also obscures Indigenous perspectives. Some Indigenous scholars defend essentialism; arguing for its strategic utility in asserting Indigenous resistance, voice and experience. Today, Indigenous scholars have theorized beyond 'hybridization' in ways that meaningfully reflect on the complexity of identity in more nuanced ways. See Jace Weaver, "Indigenous and Indigeneity," in Companion to Postcolonial Studies, Editors, Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005: 221-235; 226. See also: Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994; David Theo Goldberg, "Heterogeneity and Hybridity: Colonial Legacy, Postcolonial Heresy" in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds., Henry Schwartz, and Sangeeta Ray, (John Wiley & Sons, 2008): 72-86; Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*, Young, (London: Routledge, 1995.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Thisted remarks that in the present globalized context, Denmark continues to politically represent Greenland to a certain extent when it involves matters of international affairs or issues of security. The de-facto colonial period ended with the establishment of Home Rule in 1979 when Greenland was no longer considered a colonial state. In the circumpolar regions today (Canada, Alaska, Siberia), however, postcolonial relations are often discussed in the context of neocolonialism. Meaning, after the establishment of Home Rule, colonial structures and practices were still in place operating at various social, political, and psychological capacities creating a situation of colonial "dependency" undermining the idea of an autonomous self-government. Colonialism was actualized in the form of Danish administrators enticed to Greenland and given special privileges. Their organizational strategies created a system of discrimination, unequal power dynamics, and ideological control in the form of perceived benefits. See Robert Petersen, "Colonialism as seen from a former colonized area," in *Arctic Anthropology* (1995): 118-126; 120; Thisted,

of self-government in 2009, Greenland began the decolonizing process of establishing cultural identity which involved Danish nation-building strategies being imported to Greenland to create an ethnically-based nation.[44] These events co-produced narratives of Greenland based on ethnic and cultural divisions.[45] The problems inherent in these ethnic divisions are evident in the treatment of mixed ethnicity in Greenland. Greenland has a particular history of mixed marriages due to the many Danish administrators to the region and as a result of the high death-rate among male Inuit kayakers which created a surplus of women.[46] Mixed Greenlander's, however, were viewed as minority 'cross-breeds' by Danish authorities and Lutheran missionaries who did not allow for mixed marriages. This had material effects in that racial and linguistic factors determined the wages and societal "assimilation" of Greenlanders in processes of modernizing Greenland. These are just a few of the internal neo-colonial dynamics Arke was responding to, and critiqued in her practice.

The reconciliation of a formerly supressed colonial history[47], which involved entangled cultural, national, and ethnic narratives, can be observed in the written and literary heritage in Greenland and in Denmark. This localized context created the impetus for Pia Arke's dismantling of binary structures, and her turn towards hybridity and processes of transculturation in her text and later artistic interventions. Processes of colonialism were not only a means of securing territory and resources, but an opportunity for disseminating cultural imaginings, myths, and fictional narratives.[48] Kirsten Thisted has extensively researched and written about Nordic and Greenlandic literature, Greenlandic oral traditions, and cultural-linguistic postcolonial encounters. In her writings she asserts that the nation model imported to Greenland through Denmark was based on ethnic, cultural, and linguistic factors.[49] Danish colonialism produced a situation where

"De-Framing the Indigenous Body," 279; Erik Gant, "On the Enigmatic and Diabolic in Denmark's Greenland Policy," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 344-55.

[44] See Langgård, Karen. "An examination of Greenlandic awareness of ethnicity and national self-consciousness through texts produced by Greenlanders 1860s-1920s." *Études/Inuit/Studies* (1998): 83-107.

[45] Ibid., 121-2.

[46] Karen Langgård, "Race and Ethnicity, Greenland," 92-4.

[47] This suppressed aspect characterizes a type of "historical amnesia", or lack of colonial collective memory and unwillingness in acknowledging Denmark's complicit role in the histories of Greenland's colonization. See Erik Gant, "On the Enigmatic and Diabolic in Denmark's Greenland Policy." In *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 344-55.

[48] Claire Thomson, "Narratives and Fictions of Empire," in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and its Empires*, Poddar, Prem, Rajeev Patke, and Lars Jensen, eds., (UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2008): 88-90.

[49] Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 280.

Greenlandic became a written language, as it was the language of instruction by the schools and Lutheran missions.[50] Late 19th and early 20th century Greenlandic literature (e.g., newspapers, novels, history books) were key to the formation of an ethnic national Greenlandic consciousness and cultural identity. For example, the first Greenlandic newspaper, *Ataugagdliutit* (1861),[51] *(fig. 3)* played an instrumental role in instilling Danish sociopolitical and religious morals in processes of nation building.[52] Thisted argues that Greenlandic novels employ a form of postcolonial "mimicry" and "hybridity": they appropriated Danish literary forms and colonial narratives to express local experiences and conditions.[53] Greenlandic novels, such as Mathias Storch's (1883-1957), *Singnagtugaq* (*A Greenlander's Dream*, 1914) emphasized the binary between the "traditional" colony and the colonizer's benevolent role in ushering in "progress", "modernity," and "civilization."[54] Pâvia Petersen's novel, *Niuvertorutsip pania* (*The Trading Station Manager's Daughter*, 1944) expresses the struggle in coping with a mixed heritage and dual identity.[55] Similarly, the Danish postcolonial novel, *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* (1992) by Peter Høeg concerned a similar romantic image of a young girl with mixed Greenlandic-Inuit heritage and her struggles of assimilation in Denmark.[56] These example demonstrate the transcultural encounters in locally-specific narratives, conditions, and experiences. For Pia Arke they create the urgency for dismantling colonial narratives and imperial structures fundamental to her project to reclaim space for the recognition of plural identities.[57]

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[50] Langgård, "Greenlandic Writers," 72.

[51] Yvon Csonka, "Changing Inuit Historicities in West Greenland and Nunavut," in *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September, 2005: 321-34; Langgård, Karen. "An examination of Greenlandic awareness of ethnicity and national self-consciousness through texts produced by Greenlanders 1860s-1920s." *Études/Inuit/Studies* (1998): 83-107.

[52] Thompson, "Narratives and Fictions of Empire,"90; Karen Langgård, "Greenlandic Writers," 72. See also Thisted, Kirsten. "Greenlandic Oral Traditions," in *from Oral Tradition to Rap: Literatures of the Polar North*, Karen Langgård and Kirsten Thisted, eds., (Forlaget Atuagkat/Ilisimatusarfik, 2011): 63-118.

[53] Ibid. See also Kirsten Thisted, "The Image of Greenland in Danish Literary Narratives," The Northern Space. Arbejdspapir 1996. ed. The Northern Space (International Research Network of the History of Polar Science), 1996; Thisted, "The power to represent: intertextuality and discourse in Miss Smilla's Sense of Snow," in Bravo and Sörlin, Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of the Nordic Scientific Practices, (USA: Science History Publications, 2002): 311-42.

[54] Thompson, "Narratives and Fictions of Empire," 90.

[55] Thompson, "Narratives and Fictions of Empire," 90.

[56] Ibid.

[57] The latter phrase refers to the critical analysis of colonial relations and their ongoing effects—a widely contested area that has been challenged based on the unstable category of "knowledge" itself, and the position this knowledge speaks from (mainly metropolitan, academic centres). See also, Irit Rogoff, "Is the Postcolonial a Relative Concept?" in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 329-32. See also Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "General Introduction," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 1-4.

***What is Ethnoaesthetics?***

Pia Arke's essay, *Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995), reappropriates and repurposes ethnoaesthetics from its traditional disciplinary context. She engages ethnoaesthetics from a decolonizing perspective, as, what Mary Louise Pratt terms, a postcolonial 'contact zone,' while imparting new significations. Contact zones are the mediated sites of transcultural encounter and cultural negotiation between previously divergent histories that bind constituents in an ongoing relationship marked by uneven power dynamics.[58] Arke's reformulation of ethnoaesthetics as a process of transculturation provided a meaningful outlet to examine the Danish-Greenlandic postcolonial context and the ongoing negotiations between personal and cultural identities. In her essay, Arke remarks that she preferred ethnoaesthetics—what she describes in her essay as, *"a messy concept, a concept that inspires further work"*[59]—as a more useful method than postcolonialism to deconstruct colonial narratives. Arke's issue with postcolonialism, as evident in her article, is that it merely reproduces and reinscribes representations of an 'Other', and does not show the complex, entangled relationships and processes that exist between cultures.

Pia Arke's "mongrel" autoethnographic orientations, especially as embodied in her practice, are largely informed by the multivalency of ethnoaesthetics, as a web of meanings and contestations deriving from ethnographic practices, issues of race and identity, postcoloniality, and the politics of indigeneity. As a traditional field of study, ethnoaesthetics lies within a subfield of Anthropology, known as the Anthropology of Art. Ethnoaesthetics corresponds to the *emic* (localized) study of non-western art forms in cross-comparative ethnological practice[60]. To distinguish, a singular *ethnography* is the writing and representation of a particular culture or society.[61] The concept of aesthetics, especially in the context of cross-cultural art, is highly problematic; a quick review of its polemics reveal roots in logical positivism of Western philosophical and art historical traditions.[62] Art historically, aesthetics has involved the projection of culturally-determined notions (and theories) of beauty and value with their meanings and

[58] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes,* 7; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 192-4.
[59] Ibid., 336.
[60] Ibid. See also Robert Layton, *The Anthropology of Art*, (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[61] See James Clifford and George Marcus, editors, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1986.
[62] Van Damme, *Beauty in Context*, 13.

intentions.[63] However, issues in aesthetics, from a cross-cultural perspective, express a deeper engagement with multiple ways of knowing and being through art.[64] Consequently, the study of ethnoaesthetics within anthropology focuses more on cultural systems of value which inform aesthetic production, and the evaluation of visual and material culture in cross-cultural contexts.[65] As an area of inquiry then, it may take as its object of study, for example, African art objects and cultural artifacts, focusing on the social and cultural modalities that inform particular aesthetic choices.[66] Over time, the discipline has come to understand that some societies have no conception or word for art; whose objects and visual culture must therefore be approached and examined within the culture in which they are produced. Thus, as an anthropological approach to the study of non-western art forms, ethnoaesthetics is understood more as a methodology and system of analysis that deals with art in context from the perspective of the natives who produce and use it.[67]

Arke redefines ethnoaesthetics in her essay as, *"…a description of the West seen from the outside, from the point of view of the 'other', from a point of view such as mine, the Greenlander's."*[68] Her definition focuses less on ethnoaesthetics as traditionally studied, reformulating it instead from the perspective of the ethnographic subject as a critical decolonizing methodology. On one level her definition corresponds to the mixed theories, methodologies, and histories within the sub-disciplines of anthropology, art history, philosophy of art and aesthetics. Ethnoaesthetics allowed Arke to make visible 'messy' entanglements that characterize complex postcolonial relations and processes of transculturation. Pia Arke writes in her text, "*It is a way of 'involving oneself', a mixed up way, but first and foremost a possible way."*[69] Through Ethnoaesthetics, Arke was able to critique the objective "study" of Greenland—it's art, peoples, and cultures—essentialized under Western primitivist or modernist categories, from her own experiences and mixed identity. It is especially impactful in a postcolonial context where racial and linguistic divides determined whether one was purely Greenlandic or Danish— 'traditional' or 'contemporary'. These reasons are precisely why Arke preferred to work within the concept of ethnoaesthetics as a 'contact' space for postcolonial discussion (instead of postcolonialism) which,

[63] Ibid., 13, 44.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 46.
[66] Ibid., 46.
[67] Ibid., 46. See also Dark, "The Study of Ethnoaesthetics," 132-3.
[68] Ibid., 335.
[69] Ibid., 336.

for her, as will be seen, merely reproduced images of an 'Other.' For Arke, it will be shown that there exists recuperative potential embedded in the metaphor and practice of ethnoaesthetics in that it made space for a more productive postcolonial discussion of transculturation and hybridity for those who grapple with plural identities. She utilizes it to interrogate Western classifications of Greenland*ic* art and reformulates what it means to be a Greenlandic "artist," from a subjective in-between position that reinforces the mongrel (hybrid) expressions of her practice. The following two sections are examples Arke provides of ethnoaesthetics in her essay that outline a postcolonial condition for Arke: Arke's personal associations with feeling "in-between the ethnographic subject and object"—or, the blurred lines between artistic and knowledge production.

### *The Ethnographic Object, "Eskimo" Art*

This section showcases how Arke collapses the division between of art and ethnography, which justifies her choice for the transcultural and hybrid elements of her practice. Throughout the essay, Pia Arke provides her own definitions of ethnoaesthetics supported by multiple examples of Western visual representations of non-Western cultures. Arke engages with ethnoaesthetics—the Western study of non-western art forms—to interrogate the romanticized, racialized, and essentialized construction of Greenlandic "Eskimo"[70] (Inuit) Art, as built up through multiple,

[70] The now outdated word *Eskimo* refers to the transcontinental Canadian, Greenlandic, Alaskan, and Siberian Inuit indigenous peoples. The use of the word "Eskimo" has been widely abandoned due to stereotypes surrounding the word's usage, and that it has been colonially proffered on Inuit peoples by Europeans. The term first appeared as esquimawes in an essay titled, "Discourse on Western Planting," written by Richard Kakluyt in 1584, and widely published in 1877 on the topic of colonization of North America. Scholarly debates exist, however, over the precise origins of the term. The word was once used to describe Inuit peoples living on the shore board of Northern Canada, and has been derogatorily translated from the Algonquin language as "eaters of raw flesh." Although, David Damas has argued that Eskimo is most likely derived from a Montagnais word, ayassime'w that translates as "snow-shore netter". According to Damas, the word came to be associated with the Spanish word "esquimaos" from a whaling document written by Lopi di Isasti in 1625. French explorers to the region spelled the word as esquimaux, and was used to describe the natives living on "graunde Bay" (Grand Bay). The word Inuit (Inuk, sing.), which translates as "the people", was adopted in 1977 by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), a non-government organization that represents the interests, human rights, and political aims of Inuit peoples globally. It is used to describe those who speak Inuit languages. The preference for Inuit over Eskimo was an intentional move to shift away from its earlier derogative context, and serve as a political assertion of Inuit rights in the movement towards self-governance that characterized the Circumpolar North American context in the 1960s. There is also criticism over the word Inuit, in the way it homogenises politically, economically, and socially diverse groups of Inuit peoples and what they choose to self-identify as. In Greenland, for example, these include the Kalaallit, Inughuit, and Iit of west, northwest, and east Greenland. Mark Nuttall, *Encyclopedia of the Arctic*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 579-580. See also, David Damas, *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 5, Arctic, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution), 1984. See also, Wendell H. Oswalt, *Eskimos and Explorers*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

fragmented discourses.[71] Arke's examples of ethnoaesthetics also build a separate critical narrative around issues of interpretation and knowledge production based on the discursiveness between object, image, and text. This last point will figure prominently into her visual works which underscores her choice of the colonial archive as raw artistic material. In her essay, Arke includes two small sections titled "Eskimo Art" and "James Clifford", which locate the general domains of ethnoaesthetics in the fields of art and ethnography. The first section identifies the Western notion of "Eskimo Art" as a type of ethnoaesthetics that illustrates the problematic representations of Circumpolar Inuit peoples in ethnographic films and texts. The second section, (adopted from James Clifford's *Predicament of Culture,* specifically Chapter 4 titled, "On Ethnographic Surrealism")[72] traces the hybridization of twentieth-century modern art, ethnographic fieldwork practices and the supporting institutions that developed in close proximity to one another among shared actors.[73] Together, these sections are a commentary on the objectification of the Other that blurs the boundaries between art and ethnography. Arke uses these to demonstrate a particular mode of transcultural desire rooted in the Other. Specifically, she is interested in and motivated by a critique of the artistic representations of Inuit in the context of ethnography. She problematizes these "writings" as a kind of fascination with the Other that verges on romanticisation. This postcolonial critique of artistic representation is emblematic of what I would identify with an Ethnographic Gaze. Consequently, these sections suggest that Arke understood the disciplinary practice of ethnoaesthetics as visual events that further supported an Ethnographic Gaze—the seeing, knowing, and desiring of an Other.[74] Her emphasis on the dualities between art vs science, East vs West, civilized vs primitive, art vs. artefact, etc., create the need for disrupting the sacred institutional division between art and ethnography in the production of knowledge. Her goal was to redefine and requalify these boundaries. The examples she provides, are effectively postcolonial re-readings of ethnoaesthetic instances that expose the Western fascination for the Other.[75] They

[71] Ibid. See also, See also Wilfried Van Damme, *Beauty in Context: Towards an anthropological approach to aesthetics*, (Leiden, New York, Köhln: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1-57.
[72] See James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism," in The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art. Cambridge, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988): 117-151.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Raymond Madden, *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, (London: Sage, 2010): 98-109.
[75] For a discussion of this see *Re-Reading the West*

are decolonial gestures meant to reverse the gaze by demonstrating more complex processes of cultural exchange suppressed in past ethnographic encounters.

Before turning to 'Eskimo Art', I would like to preface it with a discussion of a local parallel discourse. As evident in the above quote, Greenland (as well as Canada, Alaska, and Siberia) has long been inscribed within what scholars have termed, 'Arctic Orientalism'[76]–the romanticisation of Inuit peoples and the Arctic landscape, who were portrayed as a vulnerable, noble, and 'true humanity'[77] that needed to be preserved. As previously mentioned, knowledge of Greenland was chiefly disseminated through literary and visual images produced primarily by Danes—a powerful tool used to usurp political, economic, and intellectual control over Greenlanders.[78] Since 1721, with the arrival in Nuuk (formerly Godthaab) of the Norwegian-Danish missionary, Hans Egede, knowledge of Greenland was built on scientific, political and economic activity in the region over which Denmark fought to secure territorial sovereignty.[79] Early research data and information collected on Arctic societies, cultures, and geographies were primarily carried out by scientists, explorers, anthropologists, missionaries, and colonial administrators.[80] Travelers and administrators to Greenland circulated a colonial corpus of visual images and textual accounts including various books, scientific treatises, expedition reports, monographs, maps, and photographs which lent scientific legitimacy to Danish claims to sovereignty.[81] In effect, they construed stereotypical imagery and biased depictions of Inuit, the geographic landscape, and life in the harsh Arctic environment. Example include: the photographs taken on American Arctic explorer Robert E. Peary's expeditions in the 1880s-90s; Hans Egede's book, *Det gamle Grønlands nye Perlustration eller Naturel-Historie* (The Old Greenland's New Perlustration or Natural History, 1729); The scientific monograph series, *Meddeleser om Grønland*

[76] In the literature, other terms appear such as 'Eskimo Orientalism,' 'Articality,' and 'Nordientalism' to refer to similar characterizations. Kirsten Thisted remarks that figures such as H.J. Rink (1819-93), Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) and Knud Rasmussen (1879-1933) should be credited with having shifted the racial conception of Inuit as 'primitive' peoples to the more romantic description of 'naturvolk', or the people of nature. The term 'naturvolk', however, becomes problematic in light of the notion of the 'anthropological present', in that it de-historicizes the immense socio-economic and cultural upheavals that occurred due to years of European contact and conquest. Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 280.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 279; See also Petersen, "Colonialism as Seen from a Former Colonized Area," 122-3.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Bravo, Michael, and Sverker Sörlin, eds., *Narrating the Arctic: A Cultural History of Nordic Scientific Practices*, Canton, MA: Watson Publishing International, 2002.

[81] Sandbye, "Making Pictures Talk," 300

(Monographs of Greenland); the 1954 scientific treatise, *Tupilakosaurus Heilmani n.g. et n.sp. : An Interesting Batrachomorph from the Triassic of East Greenland* by Danish paleontologist, Dr. Eigil Nielsen; Th. N. Krabbe's book, *Grønland, dets Natur, Beboere og Historie* (Greenland: Its Nature, Inhabitants, and History) from 1929-1930. These texts and accompanying images were often repurposed as the raw source materials for Pia Arke's visual works.[82]

In her essay, Arke presents the Western notion of "Eskimo Art" as a type of ethnoaesthetics. She takes as an example Edmund Carpenter, Frederick Varley and Robert Flaherty's book, *Eskimo* (1964),[83] which she describes as dealing with *"...a certain group of Canadian Eskimos [Inuit] and [which] praises their ability to keep their bearings in the wild, their keenness of observation, their mechanical skills, and most of all, their 'artistry.'"*[84] Arke criticized the book for claiming that "" Aivilik Eskimos" have no word or conception of art, and that art is a part of everyday life. This point allowed them to essentialize Inuit as authentic artists apart from Inuit perspectives on art.[85] Arke criticizes the illustrators (Varley and Flaherty) whose sketches and drawings which accompany the text show an ethnographic "study" of Inuit peoples with their everyday objects (tents, dogsleds, kayaks, harpoons, etc.), but whose paintings in the book show a wild, untamed, empty rugged Arctic landscape that denies the presence of Inuit peoples. As a result, Arke argues that the book demonstrates less an *"ethnographic interest in Inuit art than an artistic focus on the 'Eskimo'"*.[86] The illustrations in the text are representative of an ambivalence Arke perceives: an intense artistic focus on Inuit as "ethnographic objects", yet while denying them a concept of art. This was a major area Arke returned to in the following section of her essay. Arke's second example of ethnoaesthetics is Robert Flaherty's ethnographic documentary genre film, *Nanook of the North* (1992), which Arke contends, is a *"successful attempt at an empathic rendering of an ethnic subject"*[87], whose illustrated contributions in the previously mentioned

[82] This can be throughout the works in the Tupilakosaurus retrospective exhibition.
[83] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", 336-340.
[84] Ibid., 337.
[85] Inuit beliefs concerning aesthetics/art differs from a Western notion of art, representative of the fact that there is no word for the English equivalent of 'art' in Greenlandic or Inuktitut, for example. For Inuit, there exists a sense of continuity between aesthetic production and everyday life. In Arke's essay, Ethno-Aesthetics she states that *"...the Eskimo vocabulary has no word for art. Only after pressure from the European scheme of things did the Greenlandic Eskimo word eqqumiisuliorneq come to signify something like the European notion of art."* In Canada, the closest analog in Inuktitut to the word is Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) which encompasses all areas of Inuit knowledge and cosmology: oral traditions, stories, visual art, etc. Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 337-9.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

book, she further asserts, are aesthetic renderings of the ethnographic objects he collected during his expeditions in the North[88]. Arke takes a stronger theoretical position against Bodil Kaalund's art-historical book, *Grønlands Kunst* [The Art of Greenland] (1990) as her third and prime example of traditional ethnoaesthetics. For the artist, this text exemplifies the predicament faced by Greenlandic (or 'ethnic'—to use her term) artists, that have been essentialized under a Eurocentric cultural lens and definition of art. As such, Greenlandic art stands in proximity to a long Modernist tradition that casts non-Western art as 'authentic', 'primitive', 'pure', and 'naïve', where the *"cult of the ethnic is the cult of human authenticity."*[89] In her essay, Arke takes issue with Kaalund's language and attitude which, for her, indicate a certain protectionist attitude towards 'ethnic subjects' and authentic Greenlandic art.[90] As in the previous examples, she takes issue with how Inuit have been essentialized as authentic artists according to Western standards apart from Inuit perspectives on art and art-making. At the root of these examples, is essentially an issue of the 'ethnographic present'—a reference to how Inuit are represented, in Kaalund's text and other ethnocentric visual narratives, as emblems of a pure and primitive past, yet whose presence and perspectives are denied in the present.[91] Her main argument is that Kaalund's text neglects the present-day postcolonial realities and experiences of Greenlanders who are forced to "choose between being true Greenlanders and being true artists."[92]

Arke's second section on "James Clifford," shifts to the realm of Western Art. Specifically, she uses it to showcase the parallel development between the avant-garde modernist art movement and the sociocultural practice of ethnography. In her essay, Arke dedicates a section to Clifford's text and the close connections and affiliations among Surrealist artists to the Institute d'Ethnologie (Paris)[93]. Clifford's chapter focuses particularly on the ethnographic surrealists who migrated from André Breton's surrealist circle to join the Institute d'Ethnologie (l'Université de Paris) in 1929.[94]

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 337-9.
[91] Pia Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", 337-41. The 'ethnographic present' is a literary convention that has been developed and theorized by scholars such as Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Other*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Tony Bennett, "Evolutionary Ground Zero: Colonialism and the Fold of Memory," in *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*, 136-154, (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[92] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 338.
[93] Ibid; Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 340.
[94] Arke mentions in her essay that the Institute was founded in 1925 by Marcel Mauss, Lucien Lévy Bruhl, and Paul Rivet, and was later joined by Georges Batailles, Antonin Artaud, Michel Leiris, and Alfred Métraux, etc. some of whom would later found the Musée de l'Homme (Paris). Ibid.

Arke's previous example of ethnoaesthetics concerned Eurocentric representations of Indigenous peoples; their construction and dissemination as ethnographic knowledge through travel, writings, and collection practices. The collection of ethnographic objects, however, was motivated by a desire to collect knowledge of the Other, but also a Western desire to fashion alterity while formulating a critique of Western culture.[95] Ethnoaesthetics in this case, is found in the Eurocentric, primitivist constructions of otherness created by avant-guard modern artists—which Clifford argues, involved a process of rendering the familiar strange.[96] He identified a particular ethnographic attitude: the transgression of cultural values that equated alterity with cultural subversion.[97]

Together, these examples of ethnoaesthetics critique the racialized assumptions and stereotypical representations of the 'Other' that has characterized the Western study of non-Western cultures. Arke asserts that ethnoaesthetics has always been the display of the 'Other' rather than Western culture.[98] In both cases, European ethnocentrism lies at the heart of ethnoaesthetics, as it is traditionally practiced; an 'event' in which *"the only people actually present are the people, i.e., the Europeans that are not on display."*[99] Nonetheless, her examples also draw attention to histories that express a cultivation of the ethnographic subject; for example, the relationship between ethnographic writing and avant-garde art. The artist's unique mongrel practice strongly correlates to this entanglement, and the mixed realms of art/science. Therefore, through her case studies Arke effectively collapses the dualities between art and ethnography to reframe ethnoaesthetics (which supports the Ethnographic Gaze) as a postcolonial *contact zone*; the ideological and material spaces or sites of transcultural encounters, cultural negotiation, and historical exchange.[100] Ethnoaesthetics thus becomes a contested and reclaimable space.

### *The Postcolonial Subject*

[95] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 340-1.
[96] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 340.
[97] Clifford, "Ethnographic Surrealism," in *The Predicament of Culture*, 92-97.
[98] Ibid.,
[99] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", 343.
[100] James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): 188-219.

This section justifies Arke's preference for ethnoaesthetics based on a particular experience the artist had regarding the display of her own photographic works in a discussion on postcolonialism, which appeared in a series of newspaper articles. Her main concern was how her photographs (some of which bear her own nude image, and which she claims are separate from content of postcolonial articles) appeared to visually support the construction of "otherness," and reproduce the structure of the Gaze. This event was particularly insightful in that it helped foster a subtle claim that representations of the Other in postcolonial discourse tended to replicate the objectifying structure of the Ethnographic Gaze. The theoretical content of the articles and her accompanying images had the effect of reproducing a postcolonial object of study. Importantly, the articles deny any local context where postcolonial relations are reciprocal and ongoing. The lack of reciprocation led her to conclude that ethnoaesthetics exhibited more of the transculturation at work than postcolonialism.

Prior to the publication of *Ethno-Aesthetics* in 1995 by the Danish art magazine, *ARK*[101]*,* Pia Arke provided a selection of her own photographic works and an interview with Stefan Jonsson, a distinguished writer and cultural critic in the field of Scandinavian postcolonial studies and her close friend, for the prominent Swedish daily newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN)[102] *(fig. 4)* This is significant in that the articles serve as a point of departure in *Ethno-Aesthetics* for addressing fundamental issues in representation and interpretation in art. As in the examples of traditional ethnoaesthetics, the articles here showcase the image-text binary that she privileges, yet destabilizes, in her visual practice.[103] From January 15 - March 18, 1995, the newspaper featured a series of nine articles, edited by Jonsson, on the subject of the 'postcolonial paradigm'[104], and collectively titled *"Kulturer emellan"* [Between Cultures]. In addition to the two articles Jonsson himself authored, namely, "Världen granskas med nya ögon" [The World is Examined with New

[101] Established in 1994 with the support of Ministry of Culture grant for general cultural periodicals and Aarhus Municipality's Cultural Development Fund, ARK has for 15 years continued to be an experimental art periodical which publishes as loose sheets in custom-made, white folders. Its editors are Klaus Marthinus, Lars Kiel Bertelsen and Steen Andersen Hammershøi. Taken from "About ARK", ARK Website, Last accessed, 6 March, 2016: http://arkmappen.dk/omark.html.

[102] Stefan Jonsson (1961 -) is well-known for his books that have introduced postcolonial theory in the Scandinavian context to a global audience. He has also personally collaborated with Arke on several projects including her book project, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation, Mapping* (2003, 2010). See "Facsimile: selected documents from various archives", in Kuratorisk Aktion, *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 221-224. See also, "Contributors", in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 395.

[103] This sentiment is expressed throughout her essay. See Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics" 341-42.

[104] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", 335.

Eyes] and the interview with Arke titled, "Förbundna i trystnad" [Linked in Silence],[105] are articles by other postcolonial writers including, Stefan Helgesson, Neferti Xina Tadiar, and the eminent writer and scholar Homi K. Bhabha. Each article is accompanied by a selected image (the majority with the editors'[106] captions) from Pia Arke's photographic works, including two of her nude self-portraits *(see fig. 4).* Aside from the first article by Jonsson which offers a brief introduction, and the interview with Arke in the last article, the images appear devoid of context and visually disconnected from the textual content of the articles.[107] In her essay, Ethno-Aesthetics, Arke discusses the articles, and she asserts, *"…I alone was portrayed, in a standard single-column width photo inside the text of the interview"*[108] Moreover, she states, "All of the illustrations were created independently of the series of articles, and, so, were not originally meant to illustrate the postcolonial context."[109] Arke addresses the editors' captions, appended to some of the images, which demonstrate a problematics of interpretation: "The way I see it, the problem of definition concerns the relationship between text and the picture."[110] It seems that for Arke, the relationship between text and image in the articles have the effect of disassociating or completely obscuring the aesthetic intention (and therefore meaningful significations) of her artworks in order to more clearly focus on the ethnographic (past) and postcolonial (present) context. The captions, effectively, risked reproducing a marginalized and essentialized postcolonial subject, by drawing an ambiguity around the referent. For example, one of the articles by Makdisi titled, "Postcolonial Glory is No Guarantee of Quality" is accompanied by Arke's photograph *Untitled* (Torn, reassembled, and self-annotated pinhole camera photostat, 1993), a "torn up and re-pasted" version of her iconic camera obscura view of a South Greenlandic fjord. Some of the torn pieces are overwritten (by the artist's hand) with text from an ethnographic collection of East Greenlandic Eskimo songs. The photographic caption in Makdisi's article reads, *"Problems of definition. Is a Danish author with Greenlandic origins postcolonial?"* This very interesting caption seems to suggest that…For Arke, *"…there is no clear or simple connection between picture and the two*

[105] Original Danish titles are translated into English (the bracketed titles) by Kuratorisk Aktion. See "Facsimile" in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 220-224.
[106] I use the plural form here, as her essay refers to "the editors of the series"; indicating that aside from Jonsson others may have been involved in the editing process. See, Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 343.
[107] Ibid. See also, Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics", 341-43.
[108] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics" 341-42.
[109] Ibid., 343.
[110] Ibid.

*levels of text."*[111] Pia Arke analogizes the discursiveness of image and text, attributing it to a broader, more fundamental issue of interpretation.

### *"Clever Imitation of the Old Kind"*

The *Dagens Nyheter* articles discussed above suggest that Arke felt that postcolonialism inevitably failed to fully capture the complex relational entanglements that exist between cultures. Specifically, at the time it failed to address underlying issues of race, identity, and ethnicity in cultural representations.[112] These were also issues that framed the local postcolonial context during Arke's artistic career. Importantly, Pia Arke's understanding of ethnoaesthetics outlined the contours of an ethnic condition. The first edition of *Ethno-Aesthetics* contains a foreword by her brother, who prefaces Arke's relationship to the mongrel concept with respect to issues of ethnicity and identity.[113] In this Foreword Gant declares:

> *Ethno aesthetics is something unclean, a subdivision of the ethnic, which connotes the crossbreed, the domesticated wild. Ethnoaesthetics is concerned with the art of placing oneself between two chairs; an art or a series of feats that we cross breeds must perform at all times…who fumble in search of their identity.*[114]

In her essay Arke herself asserts that ethnoaesthetics ultimately signifies a space of possibility: *"…an opportunity for dealing with the real thing: European culture with its aesthetics, its ethnography, and its reason."*[115] Her quote suggests that ethnoaesthetics allows for the appropriation of Western culture in reclaiming identities and histories. She emphasizes the possibilities for a reformulation of ethnoaesthetics within Homi Bhabha's 'third space' of art for

[111] Ibid. 343.
[112] Ibid. 335-43.
[113] Kuratorisk Aktion (Frederikke Hansen & Tone Olaf Nielsen), "Pia Arke", in *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism: A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts*, (Helsinki, Finland: Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art, 2006), 122.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 336.

artistic self-representation: "*The ethics intensify their ethnoaesthetics, expose it to itself, take control of it in a confusing operation of reproductions, thematizations, and loving suppression."*[116]

Pia Arke's vision of ethnoaesthetics, in essence, is a decolonizing approach and attitude that works within preexisting ideologies and structures as a mode of 'writing back'.[117] Throughout her essay, Arke formulates a project of emancipation rooted in this discourse of ethnoaesthetics. Shortly after *Ethno-Aesthetics* was published in the mid-nineties, Arke began a series of earnest investigations into the study of Greenland's colonial histories with findings that would eventually produce two of her most extensive and celebrated research projects. These include *Arctic Hysteria (1996),* based on the artist's archival research into the colonial "phenomenon" that forms the title of this particular work; the personal oral history and photographic book project, *Stories from Scoresbysund (2003);* and the archaeo-mythic study into the critical relationship between art and science in the *Tupilakosaurus* (1999). Arke's visual practice is expressed through a critical engagement with narratives which express a critical recoding of colonial ethnography. The relationship between text and image is a discursive strategy that gives form and voice to Arke's work. The production of ethnography, as both a system of representation and epistemology informed her own intellectual and artistic forays in performance, text, installation, and photography.

[116] Ibid., 340.

[117] This phrase has been developed by Linda Tuhuwai Smith in the introduction to her seminal text, Decolonizing Methodologies, and refers to the process of "talking back" or "researching back"; qualities that characterize postcolonial and anti-colonial literature aimed at decentering hegemonic structures. See Linda Tuhuwai Smith, "Introduction" in Decolonizing Methodologies, (New York: Zed Boks, 1999), 7; 1-18.

## Chapter 2
## *[PERFORMANCE] "Clever Imitation of the Old Kind"*

*"This brings me to the contours of a new kind of ethnoaesthetics. In many ways it resembles the old kind; if you will, you could even call it a clever imitation of the old kind. Yet, it is also directed against it."*
– Pia Arke in *Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995, p. 340)

The themes addressed in *Ethno-Aesthetics* form the core of Pia Arke's investigative, performance-based works and artistic research methods. Her visual works and related praxis are a personal and critical response to Greenland's colonial past, Danish imperialism, and Arctic Indigenous representations. These critiques are foregrounded in biographical expressions and critical reflections. The previous chapter outlined how Pia Arke's *Ethno-Aesthetics* re-appropriates the field of "ethnoaesthetics"—what she understood as the study of non-Western peoples and material cultures, and the Western images produced of them. Her theoretical concerns centered on how representational authority has been wielded primarily through the essentialized visions and narratives of the Other. With an interest in the relation between visual media and the production of knowledge, Arke's Ethno-Aesthetics suggests a type of *scopic regime*[118] used to generate, circulate, and control the image and knowledge of Greenlandic Inuit art, cultures, and peoples. She appropriates ethnoaesthetics, ultimately, as an analytical tool and method to deconstruct Western colonial and postcolonial ideologies. Her artistic projects aimed to expose the power dynamics of cultural representation, particularly how they produce visual epistemologies.[119] She worked within these dominant structures in order to re-write and re-frame colonial histories and narratives, bringing them into visible and tangible contact with Greenlandic Inuit oral and material histories.

This chapter explores Arke's performance-based works in photography, video, installation, and text. Specifically, how her artistic devices, mediums and narrative contents draw on the history and visual language of scientific and ethnographic theories/practices as she explores critical (post)colonial themes. It addresses how this critical stance is an integral part of her project to

[118] In his text, *Vision and Visuality* (1989), Hal Foster develops this term in the context of the social realm of vision. He uses the term, 'scopic regime' to refer to dominant or hegemonic modes of representation that produce cultural realities and subjectivities. I use it here to draw similar connections to Ethno-Aesthetics as a visual epistemology Arke suggests in a reading of her text. See Nicholas, Mirzhoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2006): 53-79; 55. See also Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality*, Seattle, Bay Press,1988.
[119] For a foundational source on the relationship between knowledge, power, and discourse see, Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, 1972-77, (New York: Pantheon Books), 1972-7.

interrogate and requalify the ethnographic gaze with new meaning. A main objective is to dismantle hegemonic narratives and visions—a theme Arke addresses in her works through a repeated correspondence between body, text and image, as will be shown. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates how Arke's performative gestures produced new visual configurations that can be read and understood as plurally embodied autoethnographic articulations that eloquently reclaim (self) identity.

The first section establishes Pia Arke's personal relationship to photography, representation, and visuality, as areas that meaningfully intersect with themes of place, subjectivity, identity, and belonging. It traces Arke's early personal explorations with pinhole photography, which evolved into more refined work in the medium, and a recognition of its possibilities for artistic expression. Her most recognizable and personally treasured image of a Greenlandic landscape, *Nuugaarsuk I-IV (1990) (fig. 5)*, is the paragon of 'Arke-typicality'[120]—the postcolonial, subjective, and constructed place itself, as well as artistic motif and mode of self-expression. A featured backdrop in many of her photographic works, this image appears in the series the *Three Graces I-IV* (1993) *(fig. 6)* which uses the artistic vernacular of ethnographic display to reverse the objectifying gaze and spectacle of the Other. Her iconic image of the Greenlandic landscape also appears as the surface for the home video performance of *Arctic Hysteria* (1996) *(fig. 7)*, whose title references a peculiar medical archive of particularly discriminating discourse situated on the Indigenous female body. The installation and performance video, *Tupilakosaurus* (1999) *(fig. 8, 9),* discussed in the second section collapses the dualities between art/science, history/myth, past/present with narrative elements that become metaphoric expressions of the mongrel orientations in Arke's practice. Pia Arke's final ethnographic and photographic book project, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation, Mapping* (2003) *(fig. 10)* in the third section takes Greenlandic narratives and colonial-era photographs as a central theme; in this project the artist returns to her hometown in an attempt to rename and rebuild the history of a lost town based the oral histories of the town's living descendants. The fourth section ends with a few examples of some of her less-known works that lend greater insight into her methodological development and artistic choices. Ultimately, Arke's performances—focusing on bodies, text, and archives—emphasize the narrative potential that exist between the discourse of ethnography, postcolonial context, and Arke's own lived experiences.

[120] Gant, "Nuugaarsuk: The 'Arke-Typical' Motif," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 243-4.

***Photography and the Ethnographic Gaze***

Before turning to Arke's performance works—which adopt a theoretical framework of critical ethnography—it is constructive to first examine her personal and theoretical relationship to photography and the camera itself. Photography allowed Arke to examine the layered nature of vision and visuality[121]; complex terms that refer to imperial renderings of an Other. But photography and processes of image-making also allowed Arke to resist imperial visuality through means of reverse appropriation.[122] Specifically, she became interested in the development of the medium as an instrument of colonization and cultural adaptation.[123] She has stated, *"My pictorial work deals almost exclusively with the silence that surrounds the bonds between Greenland and Denmark. I was myself born into that silence."*[124]Arke's early interest in photography demonstrates a personal engagement with place, identity, and the processes of knowing and seeing through images. Her relation to photography later evolved into a deeper exploration of representational authority, as raised in *Ethno-Aesthetics*. Her choice to work within a more "contemporary" medium was a critical response to the modernist, essentialist discourse that dominated the traditional field of Greenlandic paintings and carvings.[125] Photography also granted her the opportunity to cultivate her own artistic and conceptual elements, which would become recognizable aspects of her practice. The artist understood photography as a "mongrel," or hybrid art form[126], that has both representative and expressive potential. Her own photography aimed to collapse dualities—between representation and experience, subject and object, documentary medium and art object—to physically intervene within the apparatus of the Gaze as a way to know

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[121] The concept of visuality, is a concept and keyword developed by theorists in visual culture studies. For purposes here, it contextualizes a discussion of colonial ethnographic imagery and processes of seeing—specifically, the production, dissemination, and interpretation of ethnographic film, photography, and print media—image-making tools that relate to the production of knowledge. Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2006): 53-79, 53.

[122] I borrow this particular definition of visuality (coined by Scottish historian, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in the 1830s) here from Nicholas Mirzhoeff's "On Visuality," 53-79. I find it useful for analyzing Arke's approaches a within a theoretical framework of critical ethnography.

[123] This is a significant theoretical position that has been argued for extensively in the Critical Anthropology literature, which over the past decade or so has come to terms with the colonizing role of the camera in shaping systems of knowledge and implicated in the legacies of colonialism. In the Greenlandic context see, Erik Gant, "Nuugaarsuk: The 'Arke-Typical' Motif," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 253.

[124] From an audio interview, "Art in a Cold Climate: Mette Moestrup on Pia Arke's Camera Obscura." http://podbay.fm/show/471685852/e/1450350900?autostart=1. Accessed on Aug 5, 2016.

[125] Presumably, also because of photography's long-standing marginalization as an object of study within art historical discourse.

[126] Kuratorisk Aktion, "Towards a Historical Narrative: Where Does Pia Arke's Work Begin and End," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 28.

it. Arke also self-identified with the mixed mongrel medium that corresponded to her own mixed background, and which she used as a leading metaphor to reclaim identity.[127] In his own autobiographical reflections, her brother Erik Gant identifies a particular reoccurring element across her photography—the 'Arke-typical' motif. He attributes this motif to Greenland itself—a Pia Arke's reconceptions of place as colonial subject, personal memory, object of study, and myth.[128] The phrase not only refers to this mongrelization of the camera itself (i.e., subject vs. object), but its role as a powerful instrument of colonization. As will be shown, a central feature across the artist's works is the use of her own body in proximity to images and representations of Greenland.

Photography's role in the constructed, essentialized visions of Greenland—its peoples, cultures, and artistic traditions - are fundamental to Pia Arke's critique of ethnoaesthetics. The documentary uses of photography have long derived from a traditional understanding of its properties as an objective medium that assigns a certain value of 'truth'.[129] In a reflection on photography Arke asserts,

> *We don't know whether it is speaking for itself or not; in that sense it is impenetrable…The photograph tells us about the confused relationship between things that are real and things that are true. Between three dimensions and two dimensions. The two groups are almost too closely interwoven in the photograph. How can oneself become part of this connectedness?*[130]

The crucial assumption Arke recognized was that photographs are presented as culturally unbiased, unmediated actors in the documentation of peoples, places, realities, and events, blurring the boundaries between truth and reality in images. Her provocation, "*How can oneself become part*

[127] Kirsten Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body, Landscape, and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 380-1.
[128] Erik Gant, "Nuugaarsuk: The 'Arke-Typical' Motif" in TUPILAKOSAURUS, 253.
[129] For a larger discussion on photography as a traditional medium in documenting contested notions of 'truth' and 'history' see, Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective: Case Studies from Contemporary Art*, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
[130] An excerpt taken from an artist statement by Pia Arke for the group show *Legitmationskort* [Identity Card], the Young Artists Society, Oslo, May-June, 1992. Collection of the Danish National Art Library, Copenhagen. Pia Arke, "FACSIMILE: selected documents from various archives," *in TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 216.

*of this connectedness?"*[131] suggests an active attempt to reconcile the subjectivity and lived experience with the representations of linear events that render collective history, memory, and identity. With respect to photography she has stated, *"They don't show anything as it is, they show our search for things in themselves."*[132] Accordingly for Arke, photography does not merely reflect or document reality; it also reveals the social, cultural, historical, and material entanglements, processes, negotiations and desires that exist between cultural encounters.

In the late nineteenth century, photography emerged as a crucial technology in producing depictions and narratives of the Other for specific ends.[133] It was used by scientists, anthropologists, explorers, and government administrators motivated by a desire to document and classify colonized peoples.[134] Photography lent scientific objectivity to the descriptions of peoples and events that were then used to classify racial and social differences. Colonial photographs emerged as signifying evidence that claimed to support European ideas of evolutionary and social progress which prevailed at the time.[135] In studies in Visual Anthropology, scholars such as, Elizabeth Edwards, Christopher Pinney, and Chris Lyman have argued from a postcolonial perspective that colonial photographs (especially when arranged with text) served as ideological devices used to assert symbolic control over peoples and territories in processes of colonization and nation-building.[136] Their studies demonstrates that images were constructed to support a particular theoretical or scientific paradigm, interpretive framework, or political agenda.[137] For example, this can be observed in the Edwards' examples of anatomical portraits of Indigenous

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[131] An excerpt taken from an artist statement by Pia Arke for the group show Legitmationskort [Identity Card], the Young Artists Society, Oslo, May-June, 1992. Collection of the Danish National Art Library, Copenhagen. Pia Arke, "FACSIMILE: selected documents from various archives," *in TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 216.

[132] An excerpt taken from an artist statement by Pia Arke for the group show Legitmationskort [Identity Card], the Young Artists Society, Oslo, May-June, 1992. Collection of the Danish National Art Library, Copenhagen. Pia Arke, "FACSIMILE: selected documents from various archives," *in TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 216.

[133] Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy, editors, "Introduction: Rethinking Visual Anthropology," in *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997: 1-35, 6.

[134] The discipline of Anthropology, in particular, has within the past few decades, become more self-reflexive and attuned to the problematic cultural biases and assumptions that have historically framed the documentation and interpretation of other cultures. Visual Anthropology is a sub-discipline of Anthropology that concerns the use of visual of visual materials and the production of ethnographic films and photography in anthropological research. It also analyzes cross-cultural visual systems and the conditions that frame their interpretations. Banks and Morphy, "Introduction: Rethinking Visual Anthropology," 6. See also, Mette Sandby, "Making Pictures Talk," 299.

[135] See Price, "Photography and Colonialism," 102-5. Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective: Case Studies from Contemporary Art,* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Mette Sandby, "Making Pictures Talk: The Re-Opening of a 'Dead City' through Vernacular Photography as a Catalyst for the Performance of Memories," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 299.

[136] Price, "Photography and Colonialism," in *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, 102-105.

[137] Banks and Morphy, "Introduction: Rethinking Visual Anthropology," 6.

peoples that objectify the subject, and claim to support parallel hierarchies in evolutionary theory.[138] Lyman's studies on the photographer Edward Curtis, whose romantic images of Indigenous peoples support the problematic notion of preserving a 'dying race,' are a similar example. Contestations of this colonial narrative assert that it denies the agency of those represented, as well as the cultural resilience, survival, and continuity of Indigenous peoples. In the archival context, photographs derive their meaning from their proximity to a colonial corpus of texts and materials that comprise a dominant historical account of colonial history; ultimately supporting the politics of colonialism.[139]

In the Circumpolar context, Danish photographic depictions of Greenland emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when photography played a key role in the visual transmission of Arctic experiences, cultures, and geographies. Colonial processes of naming, mapping, collecting, classifying, and collating data produced a supposedly empirical record of the Arctic environment and Inuit peoples.[140] During the colonial period, Greenlandic Inuit peoples were documented by visiting Europeans during their travels to the Arctic as artists, traders, scientists, missionaries, anthropologists, administrators, and explorers. Greenland's colonial history was primarily represented by Danes, who used their photographs to construct visual accounts that corresponded to their efforts to secure territory, and legitimize the exploitation of Greenlanders in the establishment of Danish sovereignty.[141] Photographs and narrative accounts often portrayed Greenland as a vast, "sublime wilderness" and Arctic wasteland inhabited by 'authentic' and 'primitive' 'Eskimos'.[142] They also revealed the fantasies, desires, and myths that motivated the specific configurations of these accounts. For example, images often depicted Greenlanders apart from Danes, objectifying the subject; others juxtaposed the 'wild', dark-skinned Natives with the White, 'civilized' missionaries and traders—omissions and oppositions in the archival record that Pia Arke was highly attuned to.[143]

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[138] See Elizabeth Edwards, *Representation and Reality: Science and the Visual Image*, in Australia in Oxford, eds. H. Morphy and F. Edwards, (Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum, 1988).
[139] Derrick Price, "Photography and Colonialism" in *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, Fifth edition, editor, Liz Wells, (London: Routeledge, 2015): 102-5.
[140] Pia Arke and Stefan Jonsson, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation, Mapping.* See also…
[141] Sandby, Making Pictures Talk," 300-1; See also Iben Mondrup, "The Eyes that See: The Postcolonial Body in Pia Arke's Work," in TUPILAKOSAURUS, 293-298;
[142] These visualizations are exemplified in the literary heritage of Greenland. See the previous chapter on Ethnoaesthetics. Sandby, "Making Pictures Talk," 300.
[143] Ibid., 301; Mondrup, "The Eyes that See," 294, 297.

These contrasting devices appear in archival photographs documenting the American polar explorer, Robert E. Peary's expedition to Greenland in the 1880s and 90s with a team of Inuit in an effort to reach the North Pole.[144] The images in this collection suggest the sexual exploitation and exoticism of Inuit women. Several images depict Peary and his male travelers dressed in massive fur coats, whose names appear across the lower frame of the photographs. Other images depict anonymous Inuit women posing nude in the harsh climate, and labeled with titles such as, "Mistress of the Tupik" (a type of tent), "An Arctic Bronze," and "Mother of the Seals (An Eskimo Legend)" *(fig 11).* The titles act as signifiers which, in proximity to the images, objectify and sexualize the women depicted as exotic Other. The images create a dichotomy between the named and clothed European male figures against the unclothed, nameless Inuit women—a visual configuration that supports the gendered structure of colonization between the rational male colonizer, and the irrational, colonized woman. They expose the racism and sexism that supported colonial oppression, and symbolically constructed the ethnic women as objectified Other.[145] These examples of Danish colonial-era photographs of Greenlanders—housed in national archives, personal collections, and ethnographic museums—expose a Western ideological system, expressed through visual configurations. Pia Arke's photographic works, are a cynical, and yet critical, response to this system; they reclaim the archive by reframing the 'photographic gaze' as intercultural encounters between observer and observed. Her photographs also re-centre Indigenous perspectives and worldviews that are marginalized or absent in dominant narratives and colonial archives.

History and narratives are a significant part of Greenland's cultural history, memory, and imagined past, as resources that have shaped Inuit identity and, significantly, Pia Arke's autobiographical reconstructions. Arke's last work, for example, responds to the absences in the colonial photographic archive through an artistic-research and photographic book project carried out between the years 1997-8, and entitled *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation, and Mapping (see fig. 10).* This work revisits documentary photography to challenge the 19th and 20th century Danish ethnographic depictions of Greenland where photography played a key role in the visual transmission of Arctic experiences, cultures, and peoples. The project involved her own travels to and from Denmark to the place of her birth in the new Danish-colony of

[144] Ibid.
[145] For a larger discussion see Audra Simpson, *Theorizing Native Studies,* Duke University Press, 2014.

Scoresbysund/Ittoqqortoormiit, North East Greenland. It is here that some of her own family members, among other Greenlanders, relocated in 1925 from the southern town of Angmaggsalik.[146] Her aim was to return photographic documentation, sourced from scattered archives, scientific studies, and personal collections across Europe's metropolitan areas, to the living descendants of Scoresbysund in an effort to reclaim the personal narratives of Greenlanders. Arke's research included finding and recording the names of individuals depicted anonymously in the photographs, conducting interviews with locals and documenting the town's first living descendants. Arke's research involved the collection of oral history accounts and the re-naming of individuals depicted anonymously in photographs. Arke handwritten interventions and the process of through naming (also an act of remembering) is a personalized process of return, and testament to the ways Arke repurposes photography's documentary potential in reclaiming a visual sovereignty that rearticulates within and between the spaces of representation. The process of renaming effectively returns agency to those marginalized by the Danish construction of Greenland and its colonial history *(see fig. 19).* This narrative is one that reveals an engagement with "colonial-historical, with map-making, time, memory, space, silence, identity, and myth in pictures of and from Greenland."[147] This is significant in that Arke argues a position throughout the project that situates her personal history as the history of Danish colonialism, where peripheral narratives also bear witness to a larger history of colonialism in Greenland. Pia Arke's work is an important reflection on photography as a powerful representational medium, as a knowledge system, and more importantly as a tool for identity formation and subjectivity.

***'United with the Instrument'***

Pia Arke developed a particular closeness to the camera and photography in her artistic practice. The camera itself offered the artist a sense of belonging to place, landscape, and memory that existed beyond the essentialised representations of Greenland.[148] As mentioned, Arke understood the camera as a mongrel, 'Arke-typical' apparatus (archetype) in that it mediates between the observing subject and the object of study.[149] Her early photographs express this duality through

[146] Carsten Juhl, "Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonization, and Mapping (2003)" in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 277.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Gant, "Nuugaarsuk: The 'Arke-Typical' Motif," in *TUPILAKOSAURUS,* 253.

the photographic technique of *double exposure*[150], and the inclusion of her own image or presence. Her photographic work, *Untitled* (Double exposure self-portrait in interior, 1990) *(fig. 12)* depicts a double ghost-like appearance of the artist, interrogating the subject-viewer relationship from both an active standing and passive seated position against a backdrop of organized taxidermy. Correspondingly, she produced a series of early self-portrait photographs featured in her first solo show, *The Daily Actions* (1989) *(fig. 13, 14)*, which capture the artist in interior settings performing certain minute actions either standing or sitting, clothed or unclothed, leaving a room, or walking away from varying perspectives and in varying degrees of clarity. In the press release for these series she remarked, *"I try to be in the everyday act, fully and entirely - I want to be one with the space that surrounds me."*[151] Arke collapsed the boundaries between herself and space, similar to the way photography appealed to the artist for its potential to bridge subject and object. The emphasis on space, presence, and perspective is a subtlety that shapes her early engagements with the camera, and forms a continuous theme throughout her practice.

From the years 1988-1992 she developed a keen interest in the pinhole photography.[152] Arke developed a closeness with this particular camera in order to have a more direct connection to the medium, and the process of image-making. Ultimately, to return to the original representational device with its divisions between subject and object, Self and Other. The closeness between body, image, and land are a recurring theme in Arke's photographic works. Her early engagement with pinhole photography involved hand-crafting and capturing images with her own life-sized wooden *Camera Obscura (fig. 1, 15)*; a reference to one of the earliest prototypes for the camera ever made. Constructed of plywood, it measured 140 cm wide, 165 cm lengthwise, and 170 cm high: *"Its dimension's accord with my size, so that I can stand and lie inside it."*[153] Retracing Arke's own childhood travels, her box was meant to travel in order to capture images of the site of her former childhood home in Greenland (which had been previously demolished) and

[150] Double exposure is the superimposition of one exposure onto another within the same frame. It is a particular technique often employed for its ability to produce artistic and conceptual photographic effects.

[151] An excerpt taken from an artist statement by Pia Arke for the group show Legitmationskort [Identity Card], the Young Artists Society, Oslo, May-June, 1992. Collection of the Danish National Art Library, Copenhagen. Pia Arke, "FACSIMILE: selected documents from various archives," in TUPILAKOSAURUS, 216.

[152] The pinhole camera is an early prototype of non-mechanical camera. A large-format typically used for landscape photography, it allows for maximum detail, clarity, and depth of field across an entire image. This is significant, in that during its early development, the images produced a complete, "all-seeing" image that was perceived as accurate renderings of documented reality.

[153] From an artist's statement for the group show *Fie Johansen, Pia Arke* in Albertslund, Denmark, April 29-May 23, 1994.

other meaningful locations in Denmark.[154] The artist further explained her camera in a speech at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts on May 29, 1990:

*During the construction of the box, I have had many thoughts about the idea of building a whole little home for the taking of pictures. That I have chosen to do this is primarily due to a desire to be united with the instrument that creates my images. By having created the instrument myself, built it with my own hands, we have become attached to one another. By building the apparatus my own size, so I can be inside it, I can become one with it body and soul.*[155]

The phrase, "to be united with the instrument," demonstrates that Arke designed the camera primarily for herself. The places that her camera travels to are meaningful; it accompanies Arke on her process of discovery and journey to reconnect with the land. Place is a vital theme in establishing Arke's relationship to the land and to herself. She reflects, *"…they* [the artist's personal locations the box travels to] *have a very clear language, which speaks of time, development, oblivion, transience. They remind me of who we are. Not always in a comforting manner."*[156] Her pinhole camera afforded her the means to be able to connect bodily with, and therefore know, a personal sense of place, home, and identity.

*In my choice of the camera obscura to take pictures lies the discovery of a sense of belonging both with the camera and with the places where I take the pictures. It is difficult to explain. But through that belongingness with the 'apparatus,' I can connect myself to the places I capture in a way that is more the place's than mine.*[157]

Inside the box, a thin metal plate was set into one side of a wall with a drilled hole measuring 1.43 mm. External light could filter through, and project an upside-down image onto a negative hanging on a wall directly opposite the aperture. The negative Arke favored was an ultra-

[154] The artist was not able to fulfil this intention, but it was able to travel to Greenland and Denmark.
[155] "Pia Arke's original speech for the inauguration of her Camera Obscura…," included in the section on "Facsimile (selected documents from various archives)", in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 215.
[156] From an artist statement for *Fie Johansen*, *Pia Arke*. Kuratorisk Aktion, *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 219.
[157] Ibid.

slow, 6 ISO black and white film, 50 x 60 cm in length that was attached to one side of the interior wall of the camera. The slow speed film allowed the artist to be in the box for a lengthy period during the exposure time, and for any movement in the landscape (such as water) to be captured. The large-format camera cast every feature in the photograph into sharp focus with clearly delineated outlines and shapes. The developed images from such a rudimentary apparatus generated highly contrasted, yet dim renderings *(see fig. 5)*. The exposure time for the camera took up to an hour, allowing Arke to control the amount of light seeping in the aperture and into the "dark passage",[158] as well as allowing her time to intervene in the photographic process in creative and meaningful ways.[159]

*The Kronborg Suite* (1996) *(fig. 16)*, is a fragmented triptych of a serene Danish seascape taken with Arke's pinhole camera at Kronborg Castle, Elsinore, Denmark. The images are double exposures by which Arke was able to capture fragments of her own figure during the long exposure time. The results produced shadowy outlines of the artist's limbs and torso, casting shapes that break with the formal composition of the waters. The two panels flanking the central image of an upside-down torso, are inverted images depicting a shadowed, outstretched arm and hand that are foregrounded, at times blended, into the water's surface. The image formed by the triptych appears as if the photographer is ritually blessing or establishing an intimate connection with the landscape. This is evidenced by the outstretched limbs and the blending of a figure into a landscape suggesting an attempt to become one with it. A reflective study in perspective, it expresses a desire to physically intervene in the process of image-making; an embodied act that obscures the distinctions between photographic subject and object.

Her most recognizable pinhole camera photographic series*, Nuugaarsuk I-IV* (1990) *(see fig. 5)*, capture a repeating black and white image of a South Greenlandic fjord. The image depicts an icy sea expanse beset with steep cliffs that appear through an ascending fog. An iceberg in seen in slow transit across the waters towards the right of the frame. A pebbled shore foregrounds a seemingly uninhabited Arctic expanse. The dreamy atmosphere of the image reflects the slow speed of the film, as time, change, process, unfolding across the landscape. The darkness of the images give a timeless quality to the subject, yet the subject's repetition emphasizes the varying

[158] This is a phrase Roland Barthes uses to reference a camera obscura. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981).
[159] Stefan Jonsson, "Performing Postcoloniality," 319.

subtleties of light, shadow, movement. Without knowledge of the artist's pinhole camera, or of the significance that Arke captured the images at the site of her former childhood home,[160] any interpretation of this series lacks some very insight into the artist's intentions.[161] However, even without an understanding of this context, the photographer expresses a carefully studied focus on the land that, beyond its subject matter, also speaks to time, process, and subjectivity. Arke repurposes the Nuugaarsukk image (4th image in this series) in some of her later photographic performances, taking on new significance. It developed into an iconic image and vehicle for self-expression, forming part of a larger decolonizing project aimed at dismantling the Danish construction of Greenland and the romanticisation of Inuit peoples.

Pia Arke's early experiments with pinhole photography laid the theoretical and conceptual foundation for her later performances in the medium. In *The Three Graces I-IV* (1993) (see fig. 6), Arke stands beside her cousin Karola Arke Jørgensen and childhood friend Susanne Moretensen in front of the Nuugaarsuk Point photograph. They each hold East Greenlandic ethnographic objects, including masks, dog-whips, a drum and doll in traditional Greenlandic dress. The image evokes Arke's essay, *Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995), in which she would later use to challenge the romanticized, racialized, and essentialized constructions of Greenlandic art. The title, is a very clear reformulation of the Classical Three Graces in Western art and mythology that reify Western cultural values. In Arke's photographic work, Inuit women clothed in contemporary dress solemnly pose with their objects, in front of Arke's enlarged photostat of Nuugaarsuuk Point, as they stare out at the viewer. They are detached from another, as the decontextualized objects they hold, and appear staged against the Greenlandic landscape. The choice to repurpose her image of Greenland as a panoramic *mise-en-scene*, as opposed to any other, is a conscious attempt to foreground the study and display of the ethnographic subject in representations of Greenland. The composition is a metaphoric device that reverses the objectifying gaze of colonial photography and ethnographic display. In one image the figures face and stare out at the landscape, as if to study it. The image is perhaps an example of what Arke would later discuss in her essay, when she asserts that *"...we turn towards anthropological humanism to study it studying us, re-appropriating its*

[160] Erik Gant, "Nuugaarsuk: The 'Arke-Typical' Motif" in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 253.

[161] They are best understood in relation to other contexts in which the work appears. Her brother, Erik Gant, believes these images were *"...not intended to speak for themselves, [but like her other photographic works] they are meant to function as medium for all manner of intentions, messages, and engagements in the relationship between herself and others."* Ibid., 254.

*conception of ourselves."*[162] Through the display of non-Western artefacts, Arke establishes a critical dialectic between objectness and otherness. Ethnoaesthetics as evoked here is a reversal, and mode of reclaiming identity.

Pia Arke's pursuit of photography was, partly motivated by Danish representations of Greenland, and partly a response to the romanticisation and essentialization of Greenlandic art.[163] The pinhole camera itself offered the artist an opportunity to understand the camera and process of image-making; to embody, and therefore know, the division between Self and Other. Arke's early camera type symbolically resonates with primitive archetypes; it allowed her to occupy the limits of representation as a way to embody, and therefore deeply know, the mechanism of the Gaze. She collapses the binaries between subject and object, while reinscribing herself onto the landscape. It was a meaningful pursuit in dismantling the power structures in representation, interrogating its ability to truly capture reality, and reclaiming an identity to place. Importantly, it also offered sense of belonging to place, landscape, and memory that correspond to her time spent with the process of working in the medium itself. Her relationship to Greenland and to photography later evolved into a postcolonial critique of the ethnographic gaze which came to fruition in her later essay, *Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995). In it she challenges the romantic ethnoaesthetic paintings of Greenland as a 'empty,' sublime and primordial landscape represented in the book *Eskimo* (1964), and that deny Inuit presence. This is evidenced by the fact that the Nuugaarsuk image presents a fragment of Greenland objectively removed from any traces of colonialization—the bearings of its past and ongoing histories, myths, peoples, traumas, images, memories, that make 'place.'

***Embodying the Archive – 'Arctic Hysteria'***

[162] Arke, "Ethno-Aesthetics," 330.

[163]Interestingly, Arke's interest in the pinhole camera developed on the heels of her first major group exhibition titled, Le passé au present – Art contemporain du Groenland [From Past to Present - Contemporary Art from Greenland] at the Maison du Danemark in Paris, which ran from June 15 – August 28. This show included some of Arke's early paintings and sketches depicting 'traditional' Greenlandic motifs and imagery including kayaks, seals, polar bears, wives with topknots, and ulus (traditional Inuit women's knives). Curated by Bodil Kaalund, a leading authority on Greenlandic art who wrote a book on *The Art of Greenland* (1983), these early paintings served as an ironic commentary on what a Greenlandic artist was expected to produce. This engagement compelled Arke towards representational devices, and so in that same year, began to experiment with early pinhole photography.

Arke's performative intervention into archival materials on colonial Greenland also plays with the expectations conditioned by the Western gaze.[164] Her pinhole images reappear in several of her works, and they take on new significance. The video *Arctic Hysteria* (1996) *(see fig. 7)* repurposes the *Nuugaarsuk Point* photograph in her most evocative performance. In *Ethno-Aesthetics*, Arke critiques the discourse of 'Arctic Orientalism'—the romanticisation of Inuit as 'noble savages' representative of a 'true humanity'. In this strikingly contrasted work, Arke's takes as her subject matter the visual and written discourse on a medical phenomenon know as 'Arctic Hysteria,' which Arke had researched in the archives.[165] *Pibloktoq* (Arctic Hysteria) is a 19th century European classification of a type of illness that afflicted predominantly women living in the Arctic during the autumn and winter months. Europeans, however, conceptualized the illness according to modern scientific and medical studies on hysteria, which systematically addressed what was thought to be a wild female predisposition and societal threat.[166] Arke effectively, highlights the ambivalency and duality between the romantic representation of Inuit evoked by Arctic Orientalism, against Arctic Hysteria, representative of "primitive" and "irrational" aspects of humanity. Exploring themes of sexualisation and the racialization of Indigenous women, Arke used Arctic Hysteria discourse as an opportunity to express her own interest in the relationship between visual and ideological systems. In her essay, Arke argued that postcolonial "theory" did not account for the reciprocity and complexity of psychological desires and processes of transculturation that underscore the range of (post)colonial experience. *Arctic Hysteria* evokes discourses of the colonized and racialized female body through embodied experience.[167] Throughout this performance Arke intentionally aligns her own body with the exploitation of Greenlandic Inuit women as aberrant Other. In doing so, her iconic image of the Greenlandic landscape becomes the conceptual surface for this discourse which Arke wrestles with in an effort to reclaim identity.

[164] This can be observed throughout her practice, especially her early paintings that ironize ethnoaesthetics through "traditional" Greenlandic art or the photographic series, *The Three Graces,* that play into the vernacular stereotype of "ethnographica."

[165] Arke traveled to New York City carried out this research at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City

[166]Lyle Dyck, "Pibloktoq (Arctic Hysteria): A Construction of European-Inuit Relations?" *Arctic Anthropology* 32, no. 92 (1995): 1-42.

[167] Trinh-Mihn-ha, *When the moon waxes red: Representation, gender, and cultural politics*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), 157. See also Tami Spry, Performing Autoethnography, 711.

In *Arctic Hysteria* (1996) video 4:3 5:55 min. (S-VHS-DVD) *(see fig. 7),* for a brief moment the viewer catches a fish-eye lens of an interior, home-like setting and a women's voice (presumably Arke's) of an intimate home recording. The scene transfers to a wide lens capturing a large black cloth spread over a sizable floor space, and the camera subsequently zooms into a large black and white image of a Greenlandic landscape. The artist appears in the nude, crawling across the large photostat recognizable as her *Nuugaarsukk* image. The sensual movements of her body are juxtaposed with carnal acts of sniffing, wandering and crawling on all fours. Arke then proceeds to tear the image apart completely before gathering the pieces into a comforting heap around her, and exits to the right of the frame. The work, which could easily be interpreted as a performative enactment of a "hysteric fit", echoes the European discourse that pathologized Inuit women based on observed episodes of the medical phenomenon.

The title refers to a mental illness that temporarily plagued native women living in the harsh Arctic environment exposed to a myriad of cultural, ecological, psychological, and emotional stressors as a result of the harsh Arctic conditions and processes of colonial contact.[168] The term was first used by the American explorer Robert E. Peary in writings on his Polar Expeditions (1891-1909), to describe a psychopathological phenomenon diagnosed in Greenlandic Inuit women who, during the winter, exhibited signs of hallucinations, screaming, singing, and loss of self-control. The victims of "Arctic Hysteria" appeared insensitive to the cold, and were prone to run naked into the snow. Europeans circulated knowledge of the medical phenomena and described it as an aberrant disease called *pibloctoq*[169] (Arctic Hysteria) conditioned by 19th century medical diagnoses of European women who exhibited signs of psychiatric hysteria.[170]

[168] It has been argued by Lyle Dick that *pibloktoq* was a term used to lump a variety of observable Inuit "anxiety reactions, symptoms of physical (perhaps feigned) illness, expressions of resistance to patriarchy or sexual coercion, and shamanistic practice" due to the stresses of colonial contact.[168] Lyle Dyck, "Pibloktoq (Arctic Hysteria): A Construction of European-Inuit Relations?" *Arctic Anthropology* 32, no. 92 (1995): 1-42.

[169] According to Lyle Dick, a Canadian historian, many academic treatises were written on the subject and, in fact, there exists many different interpretations based on cultural and linguistic differences between the Inuit semantics and Western writings on hysteria which stem from early modern scientific thought. He has intensively compared ethnographic and explorer accounts, attributing complications in translation to the phonetic proximity of terms which produce very different meanings. Pre-contact Inuit narratives and mythic folklore, however, reveal many semantic and differences leading to different translations and cultural understandings of the terms. For example, there is no equivalent of *pibloctoq* in Greenlandic. The Inuit terms *pivdlerortoq* ("drum fit dance"; "mad or delirious person); *perdlerpoq* ("he/she is mad"; "he/she is starving"); *pilugpok* ("he/she is in a bad way") share phonetic similarities with *pibloctoq*, that European classified as "artic hysteria." Ibid.

[170] As a medical discourse, hysteria characterized middle class women who were believed to have a female disposition prone to "feigning illness", or "acting as unruly animals" that needed to be cured through modern medical technology and isolated from society. Ibid., 11.

Significantly, images of Inuit women afflicted with this observable illness were pathologized in the same way as women who expressed resistant behaviour to colonial authority. Archival images of these episodic events were reproduced and circulated, building up a decontextualized knowledge of the subject.[171] From an Inuit cultural perspective, however, other terms exist for similar behaviours: *pivdlerortoq* ("drum fit dance"), and *pilugpok* ("he/she is in a bad way") which also corresponded to a type of temporary derangement among females.[172] Lyle Dick, a Canadian historian attributes this behaviour, instead of European hysteria, to other factors such as starvation and seasonal depression associated with living under harsh Arctic conditions, and the influence of traditional shamanistic ritual and healing practices initiated to circumvent the effects.[173] The impact of colonization and Western medicine on the acculturation of shamanism and Inuit traditional ways of life, is beyond the scope of this essay. [174] However, the duality of discourse resonates with Arke's interest on fragmented narratives and entangled transcultural encounters she observed in the archive. Following this performance, Arke appropriated images from Peary's collection in a montage titled, *Arctic Hysteria IV* (1997), *(see fig. 11)* which juxtaposes seven photographs of clothed explorers and unclothed Inuit women (see page 7). Her reformulation of the archive dismantles the Gaze, but also reflects an ambivalent archive that exposes the exoticisation of Inuit women in a way that sharply contrasts with the ethnographic romantic image of Inuit, as 'naturfolk' [peoples of nature].[175]

In her performance, Arke removes any material or visual signs indicating that she is repurposing archival material in this work. Whether or not the performance is meant to critique the European medical archive on Arctic Hysteria, this ambiguity echoes her sentiments on the mongrel nature of photography that expresses the *"confused relationship between reality and representation"*—discourse and truth. The narratives of Arctic Hysteria can be analogized to Arke's understanding of ethnoaesthetics as a *scopic regime*[176] that generates and circulates the

[171] In her research, Arke failed to access the rights to a particularly disturbing image in one of these "episodes" that Europeans circulated. The image depicts a Greenlandic woman in the nude being restrained by two clothed white men. The artist was able to photocopy a reproduction that is intentionally covered by a large white circle over the image. She contributed a b/w faxed reproduction in blue tone of this image in the exhibition catalogue, *ATTACK! Photography on the Edge,* Antwerpen & Baarm: Houetekiet & De Prom, 1999. See "FACSIMILE: selected documents from various archives", in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 239.
[172] Dick, "Pibloktoq," 17.
[173] Dick, "*Pibloktoq,*" 16.
[174] Dick, "*Pibloktoq,"* 17.
[175] Thisted, "De-Framing the Indigenous Body," TUPILAKOSAURUS, 282-3.
[176] Mirzhoeff, *Vision and Visuality*, 155.

image and knowledge of Greenland. Arke's performative intervention inscribes herself into the discourse of Arctic Hysteria, used here as conceptual medium, to express the desires, intentions, and identities that exist between cultures, or between the Indigenous and female body.

Arke's pinhole camera and the photographs she produced are an embodied exploration of place, identity, and image-making that express a longing to become one with the space around her. Likewise, in her performance, Arke tears her treasured image of Greenland in the nude, an act that both visually evokes the language of Arctic Hysteria, but also expresses a desire to become one with the image. Through her sniffing, embracing, tearing, and thrusting onto a two-dimensional and inanimate material surface, the viewer senses a will to push through the object and image, to infuse the living body with its experiences into the static image. The desires evident in the performance bear similarity to decolonizing methods discussed by scholar Mishuana Goeman whose book, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations (2013)* concerns the inscriptions of colonialism, imperialism, race, and gender on place.[177] Developing a theory of *spatial decolonization*, grounded in intersectional theories and methods of feminist discourse, Goeman's "…interrogates the use of historical and culturally situated spatial epistemologies, geographic metaphors, and the realities they produce..."[178] She focuses on spatialized knowledge and power, specifically, the critical re(mapping), restructuring, and unsettling of colonial structures through embodied narratives, experiences, and relations of Native women.[179] Ultimately, she argues that the texts, materials, bodies, images, and land are sites that bear traces of colonial histories and the ongoing (post)colonial legacies that form place.[180] Consequently, Arke's performance draws this connection between the body and the land which bear the inscriptions of colonialism. Through it lies an anticipation of the potential for the naked body to be both a written

[177] She distinguishes space from place, in that space constitutes a set of relations, possibilities, and process while places become the material settings for organizing social relations. Mishuana Goeman, "Introduction: Gendered Geographies and Narrative Markings," in *Mark my Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1.

[178] Goeman, "Introduction," 1.

[179] Ibid., 1-3.

[180] The term 'post-colonial' is itself a contested theoretical "space" that implies a sense of termination after a period of imperialization and colonization. This counters the fact that colonialism has, since then, taken alternate shape through global capitalism, neoliberalism, settler and neo-colonial regimes that continue to have an impact on the present social and economic realities of Indigenous communities. It also tends to homogenize different histories and experiences. See Stuart Hall, "When was 'The Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit, in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, eds. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curtis, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 242-260.

and speaking subject. With this work, Arke writes back in a form of visual sovereignty that gives voice to the exploited silent periphery, the nameless, yet is empowered through the ideological mechanism and apparatus of her own body and the ethnic experience. Arke subverts the observational gaze by exposing the archival duality between Arctic Orientalism and Arctic Hysteria. Together they signify the confliction between antagonism and desire expressed at the site of the Indigenous female body. Arke's discursive performance is a wrestling physical and ideological struggle between subject and object. A desire to become one with the object as a way of knowing it, the act of tearing as taking control over the representation. Ultimately, Arke's develops a mongrel autoethnography, distinguished from any other, as a decolonizing attempt to dismantle master narratives and re-write through embodied critical writing and performance. The performance is not merely a re-enactment of Arctic Hysteria as the title suggests. In *Ethno-Aesthetics* she emphasizes the postcolonial 'third space' in art, as a space for actively fleshing out the predicament of an ethnic condition. This predicament is analogized through Arke's struggle between the image and the body as a textual mechanism that is entangled in histories, identities, and intentions.

***Between Myth & Science - A Mongrel Metaphor***

Narratives, myths, and oral traditions are a significant part of Kalaalit's cultural history, identity, memory, imagined past, passed down from generation to generation.[181] These are among the resources—memories, impressions, histories, materialities etc.—that shape what Arke has called her "mongrel" artistic practice. Arke's pursued artistic-research practice with interventions in museums and colonial archives, shortly after *Ethno-Aesthetics* was written, to critically engage the field sciences. In the installation and performance video, *Tupilakosaurus* (1999) *(see figs. 8, 9)* work, the artist employs European scientific texts and the Greenlandic *tupilaq*[182]; cultural artefacts that become the raw conceptual material for her interstitial explorations into myths, origins, and

[181] Thisted, Kirsten, "From Oral Tradition to Rap: Literatures of the Polar North," *Journal of Northern Studies*, 2 (2011): 105-111; "De-Framing the Indigenous Body, Landscape, and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke." In *TUPILAKOSAURUS: Pia Arke's Issue with Art, Ethnicity, and Colonialism*, 1981-2006, Kuratorisk Aktion, Editors. Copenhagen: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2012: 279-291; Christian Berthelsen, "Greenlandic Literature: Its Traditions, Changes, and Trends," in *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1986), pp. 339-345.

[182] A tupilaq (pl. *tupilait*) refer to "a humanly created malevolent non-human being." See in-text below for more detail. The thesis below is included, as it is one of very few studies into the tupilaq in the Greenlandic context. Sheila Ruth Romalis, "The Tupilaq: Image and Label: Understanding East Greenlandic Carvings," M.A. Thesis, Submitted March, 1985, Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia, 195 pp.

narratives *(fig 17, 18).* In Greenlandic mythology, *tupilait* are composite creatures assembled from a variety of organic materials, by an *angakkok* (shaman), and sent into the sea where it develops magical powers to destroy enemies of the *angakkok.* With the arrival of Lutheran missionaries to Danish-colonized Greenland, processes of cultural assimilation forced the removal of traditional Inuit ways of life, and the suppression of Greenlandic cultural traditions and practices. A vital Inuit carving tradition persisted, however, and *tupilait* emerged in carved representational form as embodied oral traditions that served as symbolic and communication devices. They were interpreted by Europeans in ways that fostered the acculturation of *tupilait* as commodified "art."[183] With *Tupilakosaurus*, Arke collapses the rigid separations between art/science, history/myth, narrative/fiction, object/artefact etc., that echo the mixed and mongrel identity Arke assumed in her art practice. In her text *Ethno-aesthetics,* Arke traces the development and proximity between art and ethnography in the production and dissemination of knowledge. Similarly, in this performance installation the artist explores Inuit cultural mythology alongside Western scientific accounts; discursive fields that situate the artist's explorations into 'archaeologies of knowledge' through practices of myth-making.[184] An engagement with myth-making allowed Arke to capture intercultural imaginings, fictions, and historical traditions between hegemonic history.[185]

In 1999 Pia Arke visited the Geological Museum of Copenhagen in 1999, where she learned the account of the paleontologist, Eigil Nielsen, and his 1930s finding of a hybrid vertebrate he excavated in Northeast Greenland not far from Arke's childhood home. Nielsen published research on this specimen in a publication titled, *Tupilakosaurus Heilmani: An Interesting Batrachomorph from the Triassic of East Greenland*[186], in the scientific monographic series, *Meddelelser om Grønland/Monogrpahs on Greenland*.[187] Shortly after her visit, Arke

[183] Sheila Ruth Romalis argues that *tupilait* carvings became a separate material category, apart from their mythic origin as mental images of the *angakkok,* and were a direct result of the necessary adaptations Inuit underwent as a result of a rapidly changing cultural environment. See Romalis, "The Tupilaq: Image and Label," ii-iii.

[184] Juhl localizes the term, 'Greenlandic archaeologies of knowledge,' which he adopts from the title of Michel Foucault's book, *Archaeologies of Knowledge.* Some of the themes in this text resonate with the fundamentals of Arke's practice: the epistemological structures of knowledge, power, discourse. Carsten Juhl, "The Cleverness of Pia Arke: Fragments of an Experience of Mestization, in *TUPILAKOSAURUS*, 323-32.

[185] Ibid., 324.

[186] The name is a combined reference to the Greenlandic "tupilak" and the paleontologist Gerard Heilman. See Erik Gant, *Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch* (1999), in *TUPILAKOSAURUS,* 274.

[187] This video and installation of Tupilakosaurus formed part of a group exhibition titled, Arke, Kalkau, Livbjerg, Raaen, in Roskilde, Denmark, which ran from January 15 – March 28, 1999. The theme of the show was centered on artists who employ a particular volume of the scientific monograph series *Meddelelser Om Grønlands* [Monographs on Greenland]. The publication, in circulation since 1878, has produced international research and expedition reports

produced a video performance and installation re-titled, *Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch* (1999), co-produced with Anders Jørgensen. In the video, geologist Svend Erik Bendix-Almgreen[188] recounts the story of Nielsen and the discovery of a transitional fossil, an extinct vertebrate which had both reptilian and amphibian traits. As the geologist narrates, the camera cuts to the artist, who is seen assembling an interlocking stack of papers from Nielson's text into the form of a column, and in front of what appears to be a projection of Arke's *Nugaarsukk* image. Simultaneously, the viewer hears Arke reading the myth of the *tupilaq (fig 18).*

Myths and oral stories are repositories of Inuit cultural knowledge. Long-standing in Greenlandic Inuit mythology and oral tradition, the *tupilaq* myth concerns an *angakkok* (shaman) who fashions a composite creature from human bones, skin, and other organic matter which, when imbued with life, acquires magical powers, malevolent traits, and destructive potential. Tupilait are fascinating creatures that come into being through various processes: they are animated through songs, and sent out into the sea with the sole purpose of destroying enemies of the shaman.[189] The transformative creatures, "seen" only by shamans, are, therefore, understood as cognitive images, (i.e., they exist primarily in the imagination as spirit beings and shape cultural realities); unique entities given expression according to Inuit categories of meaning.[190] However, Danish colonization and Christian conversion brought processes of rapid acculturation and assimilation that fundamentally suppressed Inuit cultural systems and knowledge traditions.[191] This forced Inuit to adapt and restructure their oral traditions and material practices into literacy with an emphasis on the written text.[192] As a result of these cultural upheavals, the *tupilaq* transformed from mythic images into reproducible carved figurines with their own set of identities and associations.[193]

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on Greenland. The artists who participated in the show not only disassembled and rearranged Nielsen's text and image proof sheets, but also decontextualized their scientific content by removing the illustrations and placing them in the space of art.

[188] Svend Erik Bendix-Almgreen, Head of the Section of Vertebrate Paleontology.

[189] Mariko Namba Walter and Eva Jane Neumann Fridman, "Greenland and Shamanism," in *Shamanism: An encyclopedia of world beliefs, practices, and culture*. Vol. 1. (Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford, ABC-CLIO, 2004): 297-303; Romalis, 33. This includes: spirits that needed to be cast out, illnesses that plagued an individual, etc.

[190] Romalis, "The Tupilaq: Image and Label," 8, 33.

[191] Greenlandic music, dance, songs, rituals, myths, oral stories, etc. and other cultural traditions underwent a significant process of acculturation as a result of Danish colonization and Lutheran missionaries to the region. See Yvon Csonka, "Changing Inuit Historicities in West Greenland and Nunavut," in *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September, 2005: 321-34; Hauser, Michael. "Traditional and Acculturated Greenlandic Music." *Arctic anthropology* (1986): 359-386;

[192] Ibid.

[193] This is a main argument by Ruth Romalis in her research into the Greenlandic *tupilaq*.

The critique of cultural artefacts as "ethnic objects," and processes of acculturation, as evoked in *Tupilakosaurus*, are recurring themes throughout Arke's practice. Interpreted through a European cultural lens and concept of art, ethnographers and art historians have contributed to the transformation of mythic images into acculturated carved figurines commodified as cultural, or "ethnic", art for international markets.[194] In *Ethno-Aesthetics*, for example, Arke discusses Bodil Kaalund's book on 'Eskimo Art,' which she claims essentializes Greenlandic art. With its special focus on *tupilait* carvings, Arke critiques Kaaalund's claim that Inuit carvings are to be "listened" to, rather than "seen," a Western perspective that Arke suggests, romanticizes the "primitive" mythological form while denying the value of their material qualities. Apart from their mythic origins, *tupilait* belong to a long-standing Greenlandic carving tradition whose production generates cultural capital as tourist souvenirs. Today, the *tupilaq* is the national symbol of ethnicity and Indigenous culture of Greenland. Arke reacts to this favouritism based on the view that tourist art represents the continuing evolution and adaptation of Inuit culture, as well as Arke's own ethnic and mixed "mongrel" identity.

The web of meaning surrounding the *tupilaq*—as myth, carved figure, national symbol, and tourist souvenir—is the central "ethnoaesthetic" (i.e., ethnic or non-Western art) object which Arke, through embodied performance, reclaims. In the video performance and installation, the hybrid *tupilaq* is a metaphor for Arke's mongrel identity, which forms a symbolic motif in this work and across her practice. The clearest evocation of the mongrel is in the geologist's description of Nielsen's hybrid fossil he named, *Tupilakosaurus*, with two vertebral centers, that *"…rise up in a spinous process"*[195] –a reference to its transitional state from amphibian to reptile. As he continues to describe the vertebrate identifying *"…traits that mark an animal in the process of formation or becoming,"* viewers see the artist building a precariously leaning "spinous" monument. Significantly, in East Greenlandic mythic tradition, *tupilait* are creatures assembled with bones using the thumb and forefinger of the *ilisitsuq* (ritual practitioner or shaman), and specifically not carved. Arke's assemblage of the scientific texts in her embodied performance, visually metaphorizes the *tupilaq*, as a composite corpus of Western knowledge (the "bones")

[194] Romalis, "The Tupilaq: Image and Label," 104.

[195] An excerpt from the video performance, *Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch (1999)*, co-produced with Anders Jørgensen.

animated through the Indigenous knowledge (the "flesh") in an embodied performance.[196] In this performative installation Arke collapses the written and the spoken word; emphasizing the close proximity of Inuit cultural knowledge to Western scientific practices. Scientific texts and the *tupilaq* figurine, as cultural artefacts awakened as material technologies of cultural assimilation. The artist aligns her own body with Western and Greenlandic material histories and narratives that reclaims the hybrid *tupilaq* as embodied oral tradition, while dismantling the gaze of the "ethnic artefact."

***Conclusion – Writing Through Land***

In conclusion, Pia Arke's performative gestures oscillate between the critical and theoretical realms of representation to autoethnographic qualities of embodiment, emotion, subjectivity tied to place.[197] Arke's embodied relationship to the camera and processes of image-making correspond to the appearance of her own body in many of her photographs and performance works. The discursive relationship between text, body, and image are prevalent in autoethnographic praxis, where "the living body/subjective self of the researcher is recognized as an integral part of the research process."[198] In this sense, "the autoethnographic text emerges from the researcher's bodily standpoint as she is continually recognizing and interpreting the residue traces of culture inscribed upon her…"[199] Like her earliest land-based projects, Arke's works draw discursive ties between the body, image, and land. They are a reading and writing of self, constituted through place—whether geographic, territorial, cultural, or symbolic. Place, as a mélange of sites entangled in postcolonial histories, peoples, power relations, and representations.

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[196] Beyond the scope of this paper is another discussion on the cultural trope of metaphor. James Fernandez has an excellent focus on materiality as 'structural metaphor,' which moves beyond traditional understanding of metonymic forms to more cognitive and embodied functions. See James Fernandez, *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology,* Stanford University Press, 1991. See also, Claude Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, (New York: Schoken Books, 1995).

[197] Some of Arke's earlier, less-known works help to further demonstrate the thematic linkages between place, space, body, and land. Her early pinhole explorations also developed alongside a few conceptual, site-specific land art projects with close friend, Michael Petersen. *Untitled* (Blue square land art project, 1988) are two large (2x100 m²) ultra-marine blue squares painted onto the land. One square is painted onto an empty lot in Copenhagen, Denmark; the other on a mountain side in Nuuk, Greenland (fig. 20-2). *The Necromancer's Journey to the Moon* (1988) (fig. 22), features Petersen in the nude posed beside a mountain stream in Nuuk whose red waters, brightly contrasted against darkened skies, flows as a river of blood symbolically draping the Greenlandic landscape. Abstract monuments to a silent colonial history, Arke's spatial interventions in the landscape strikingly connect and re-map postcolonial geographies of place, body, and land between Greenland and Denmark.

[198] Tami Spry, "Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis," in *Qualitative Inquiry*, Volume 7 Number 6, (2001): 706-732.

[199] Ibid.

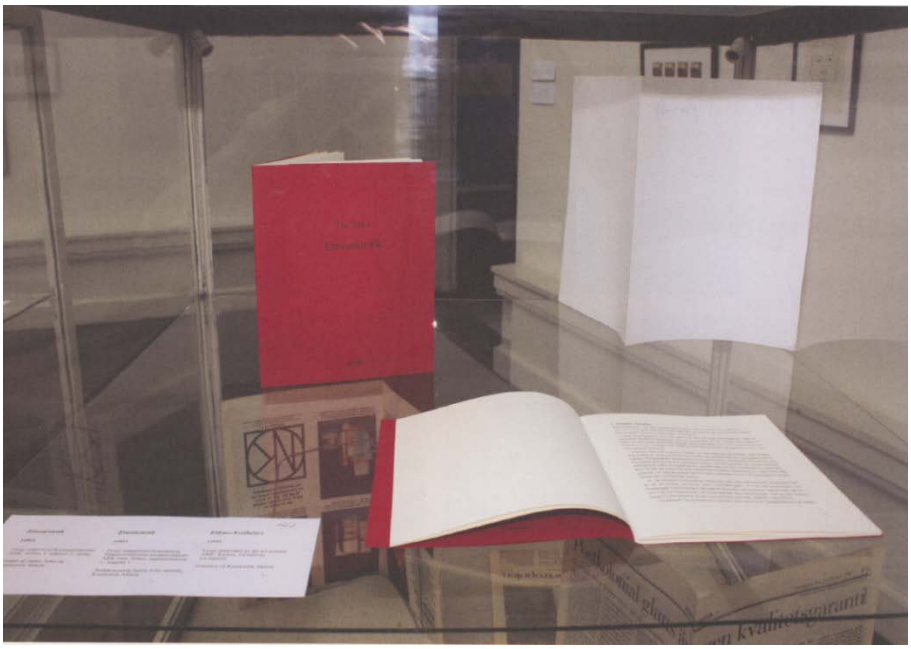
Pia Arke's artistic-research practice expresses a critical and theoretical engagement with ethnography as a decolonial practice. Appropriating Western materials and techniques of ethnography, Arke's writing and visual practice aimed to dismantle the Ethnographic Gaze; embedding it with new meaning as a way to reclaim identity. Working in critical postcolonial themes and the history and theory of ethnography, Arke's artworks reformulate the colonial archive as mediating discursive, and contested sites for the reclaiming and refashioning of identities and cultural narratives. Through a discursive relation between body, image, and text, Arke exposes the power dynamics in cultural representation reformulating discourse and the archive as the production of visual systems of knowledge. Her early pinhole explorations are the origin point for her collapse of binary forms between subject and object, representation and experience. Her personal and embodied relation to the ‘apparatus’ are critically reflected in her performance works. Similarly, Arke’s performances in photography allowed her to engage in processes of image-making and representational practices as a dominant theme in deconstructing the textual-material apparatus that supports an Ethnographic Gaze. Arke’s performances in photography allowed her to engage in processes of image-making and representational practices as a dominant theme in deconstructing the textual and photographic apparatus that supports an Ethnographic Gaze.

Returning to the notion of ethnographic self-fashioning, Arke’s decolonial engagements are meaningful because they shape a continued dialogue with critical theorists such as James Clifford, Mary-Louis Pratt, Hal Foster, as to the efficacy of autoethnography or 'ethnographic self-fashioning' in contemporary art practices. In particular, Arke's autoethnographic approaches outline the transformative and processual potential of 'writing the self’ in decolonial art practice in a way that ultimately returns life, agency, voice. And although Hal Foster argues that the artist-as-ethnographer's self-fashioning through alterity risks assuming role of 'native informant', in the end, Arke demonstrates that self-fashioning is more than a mere "theatre of projections." Arke's set of aesthetic and political gestures are an embodied archive of narratives, experiences, identities, and histories that foreground crucial postcolonial sites in formation. They are critical autoethnographic writings and performances that expose and express the 'messy' mechanics of self-representation.

## Figures

1. A photograph depicting Pia Arke next to her hand-built pinhole camera, and holding her image of *Nuugaarsuk Point*, Narsaq, South Greenland (1990) taken with the camera. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. In collection of Brandts Museum of Photographic Art, Odense. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

2. Pia Arke's *Ethno-Aesthetics* (1995) on display for the retrospective exhibition, *TUPILAKOSAURUS: Pia Arke's Issue with Art, Ethnicity, and Colonialism, 1981-2006*, 1995. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.



3. *Dagens Nyheter* article cover, “The World is examined with new eyes” by Stefan Jonsson. Features a reproduction of Arke’s Self-Portrait, (1992), Jan. 15, 1995: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Image courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

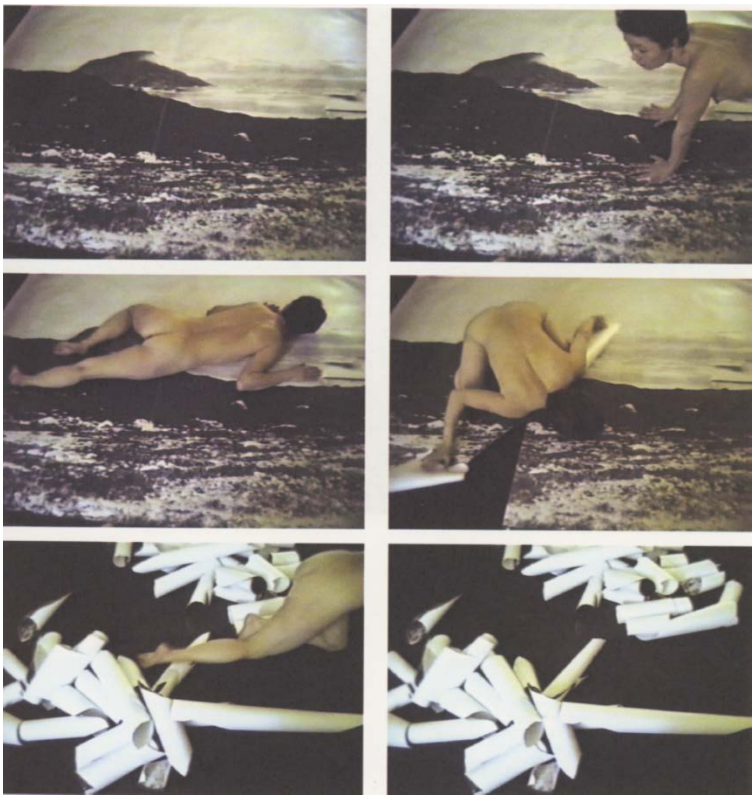

DN. Kultur & Nöjen

Världen granskas med nya ögon

4. Pinhole Camera Photograph, *Nuugaarsuk I, II,* (series of four gelatin silver prints, 49.5 x 59.5 cm each), Nuugaarsuk Point, Greenland, 1990. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Images courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

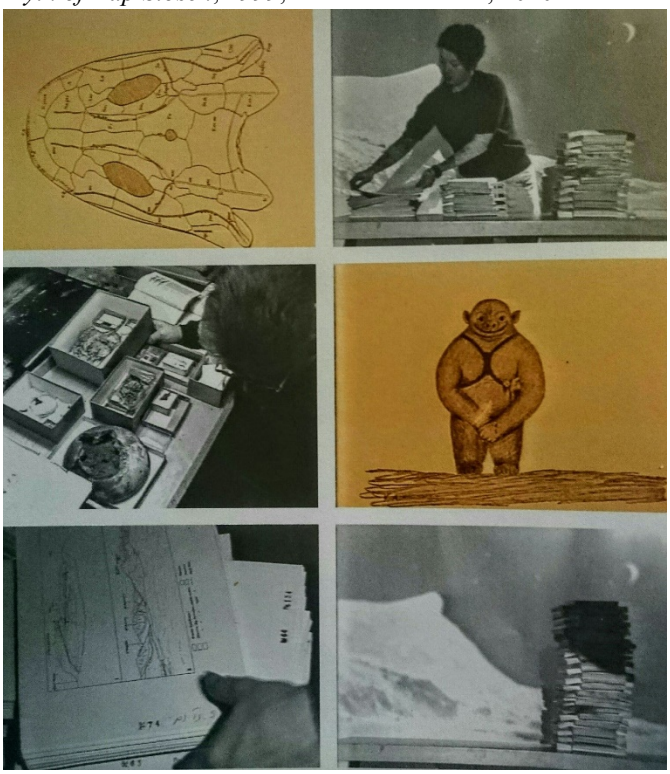
5. *The Three Graces*, 1993. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. 4x gelatin silver prints (110 x 90.3 cm each) of Pia Arke with her cousin (Karola Arke Jørgensen) and childhood friend (Susanne Moretensen) from Ittoqqortoormiit (Scoresbysund), holding Greenlandic objects. They are standing in front of Pia Arke's photostat taken with her life-size pinhole camera of Nuugaarsuk Point, Greenland. Photo held in Collection of Brandts Museet of Photographic Art, Odense. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Image courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

6. Photo stills, Pia Arke, *Arctic Hysteria*, 1996. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Images courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

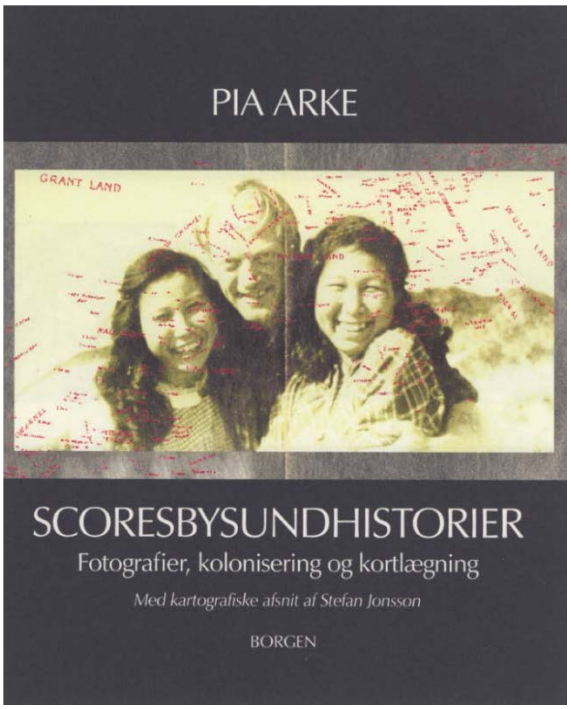


7. Arke visiting the Geological Museum of Copenhagen (1999), and listening to the geologist Svend Erik Bendix-Almgreen, Head of the Section of Vertebrate Paleontology, give an account of Eigil Nielsen. Still image from *Tupilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch* (1999), co-produced with Anders Jørgensen. Image still: Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

8. Building the tupilaq. Pia Arke and Anders Jørgensen, T*upilakosaurus: An Interesting Study about the Triassic Myth of Kap Stosch*, 1999, Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.



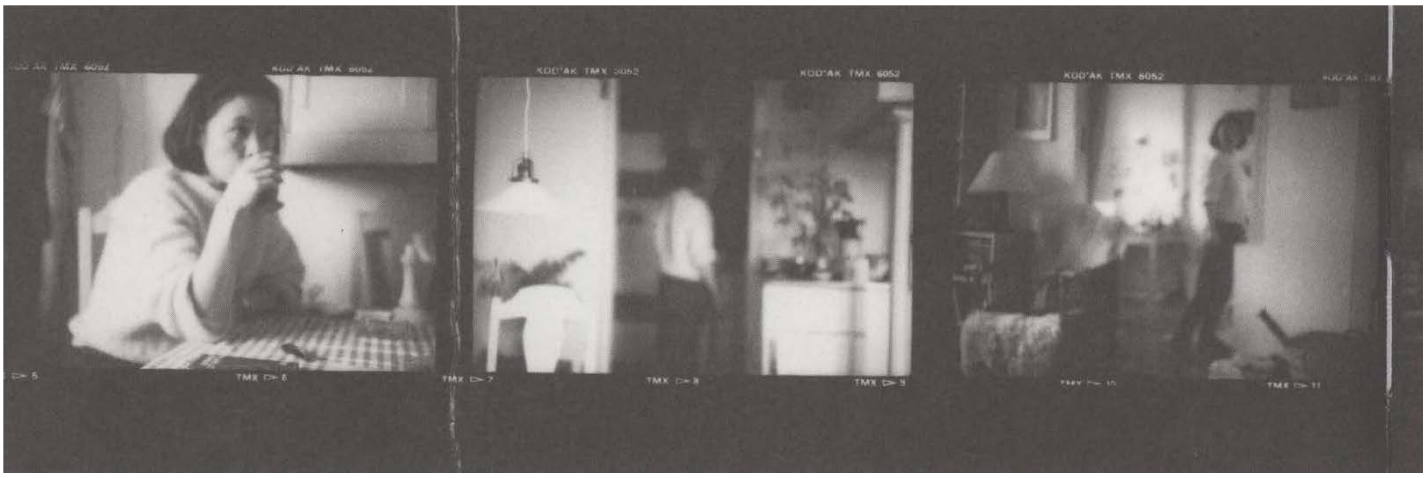
9. Book cover, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation, Mapping*, 2003. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.



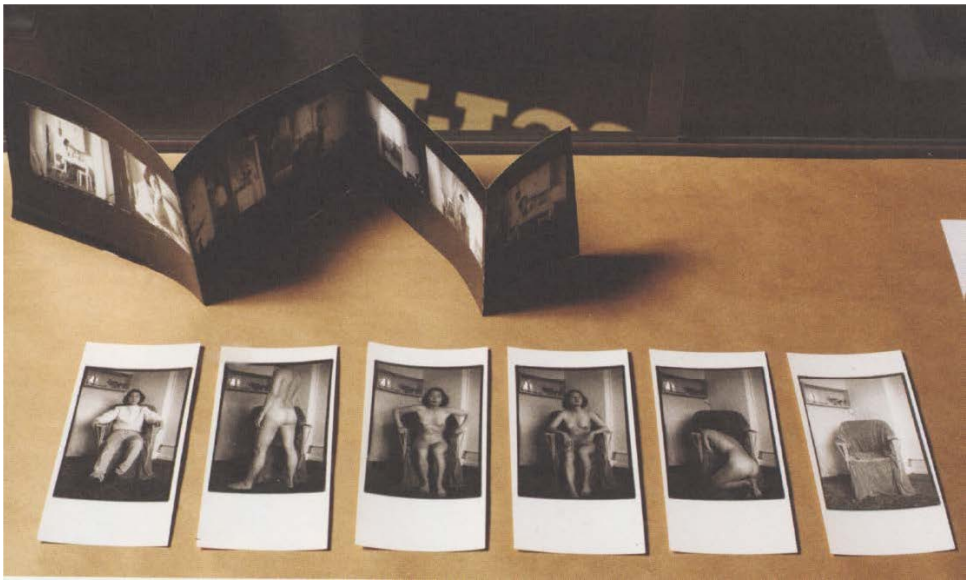
10. Pia Arke standing next to her photo montage *Arctic Hysteria IV* (1997): Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

11. *Untitled*, Digital colour image of double exposure, self-portrait in interior, 1990. Collection of Søren Arke Petersen. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

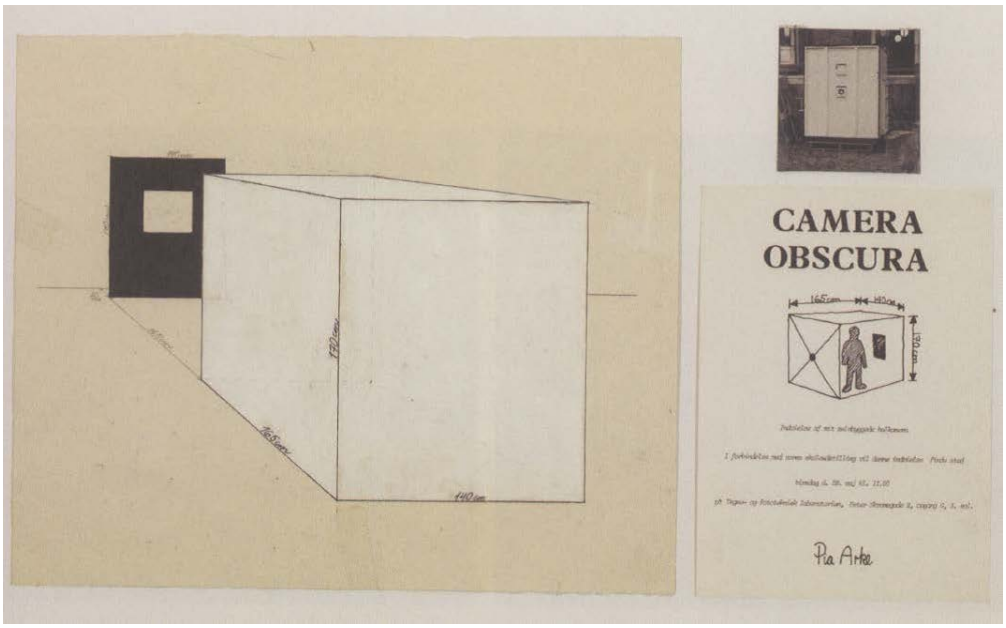
12. *Untitled*, Self-portrait in interior setting, 1989. Black and white Leporello photographic suite, 6 images. 12.7 x 66.6 cm. Photo by Peter Baastrup. Collection of Søren Arke Petersen. Image courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.



13. *Untitled*, Self-portrait, Arke undressing in interior setting, 1989. Series of 6 black and white photographs. Collection of Søren Arke Petersen. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Image courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

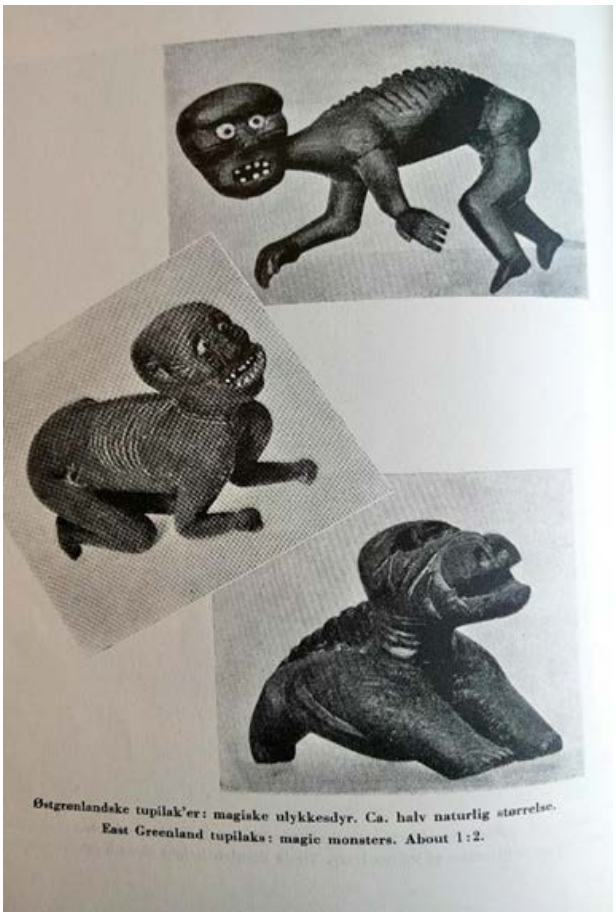


14. *Untitled*. Drawing diagram and plan for Pia Arke's large camera obscura, 1990. Kuratorisk Aktion 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.




15. *The Kronborg Suite*, 1996. Arke's own body (from inside the camera obscura) is captured onto the film. Three silver gelatin pinhole camera photographs (49.8 x 59.5) taken at Kronborg Castle, Elsinore. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

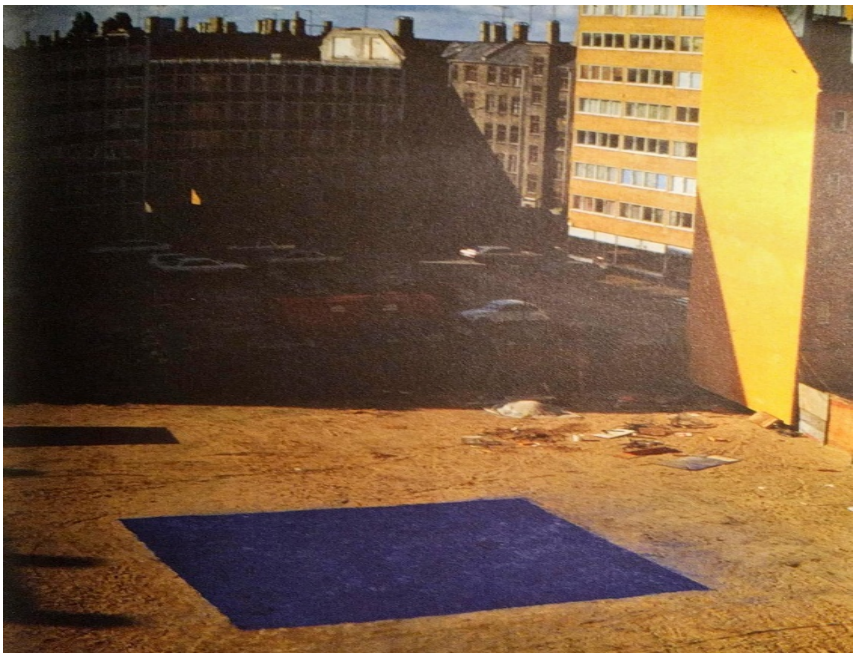
16. Carved representational figures known as tupilait. The myth of the Greenlandic tupilaq concerned monstrous creatures assembled by an *angakkok* (shaman) from animal bones and organic matter, and sent into the sea to destroy enemies of the shaman. Image: Erik Holtved, *Eskimokunst: Eskimo Art* (Copenhagen, 1947), p. 36.



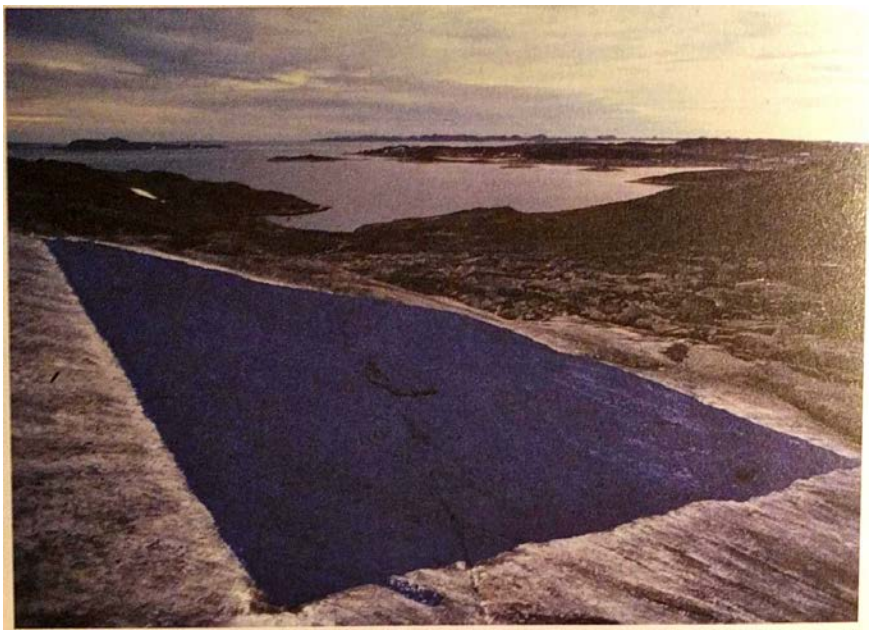
Østgrønlandske tupilak'er: magiske ulykkesdyr. Ca. halv naturlig størrelse.
East Greenland tupilaks: magic monsters. About 1:2.

17. An image from Pia Arke's book, *Stories from Scoresbysund: Photographs, Colonisation, Mapping,* 2003. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.

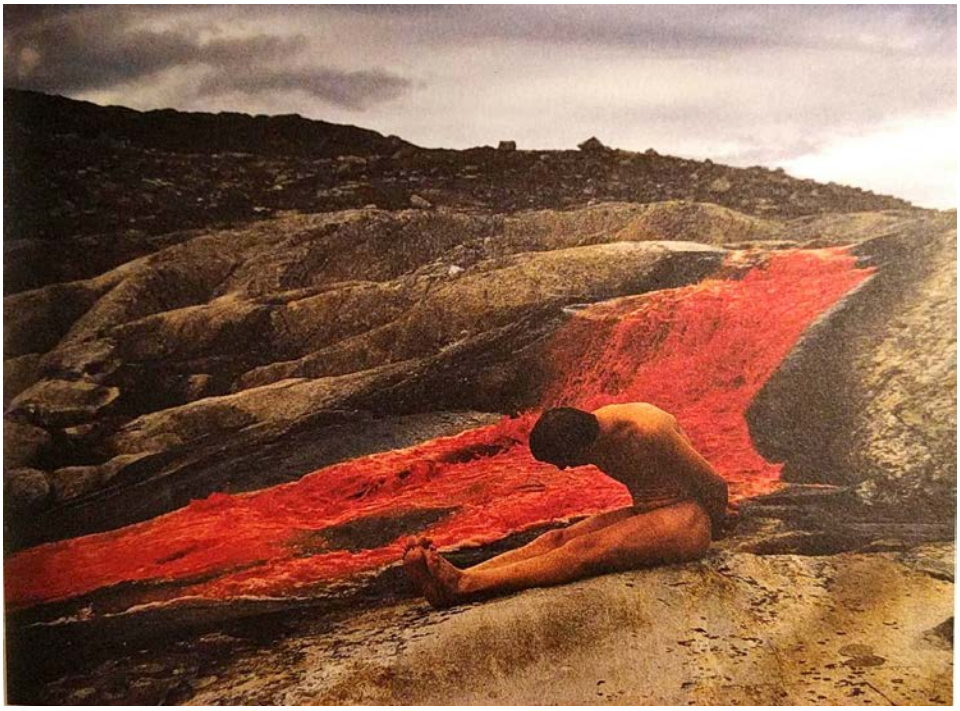
18. *Untitled,* Blue square land art project (2 x 100m²), empty lot in Nansengade 23, Copenhagen, Denmark. Pia Arke and Michael Petersen, 1988. Photo: Unknown. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Collection of Søren Arke Petersen. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.



19. *Untitled*, Blue square land art project, mountainside in Nuuk, Greenland. Pia Arke and Michael Petersen, 1988. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo: Unknown. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Collection of Søren Arke Petersen. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion and Søren Arke Petersen.



20. Colour photograph of *The Necromancer's Journey to the Moon*, (87 x 129 x 15 cm), Pia Arke & Michael Petersen. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Photo: Peter Baastrup. Kuratorisk Aktion, 2010. Collection of Fonden til oprettelse af Grønlands Nationalgalleri, Nuuk. Photo courtesy of Kuratorisk Aktion.



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