Contested Circumpolar: Domestic Territories presents eight narratives of inhabitation from each Arctic nation that reveals deep and complex connections between domestic space and the larger territory. The installation situates domestic life entangled with broader sociocultural, economic and geopolitical forces, and is presented as “core samples” capturing place-specific domestic-territorial linkages that are also emblematic of collective matters of concern in the Arctic. A series of rooms within each house juxtaposes the distinct artifacts and architectures of domestic life, while the visual narratives on the underlying cores expose the interlinked contexts that give shape to these domestic scenes.

Material culture, spatial practices, old and new technologies are depicted, as is evidence of a transforming region. The models further capture the full range of realities and urgencies surrounding the daily life and livelihood of Arctic inhabitants. At a local scale, the uniquely northern municipal infrastructures required to enable “modern” inhabitation are described. At a regional scale, the relationships between communities and land such as Indigenous subsistence practices are highlighted. At the transnational scale, the models document the by-products of globalization, and the dislocation and relocation of communities which this engenders.

From mold to mines, from rooms to regions, circumpolar domestic space represents the frontline of transnational politics, Indigenous self-determination, and radical socio-environmental adaptation.

Contested Circumpolar: Domestic Territories was a collaborative project led by four primary researchers across three schools of architecture. It employed 8 student-researchers who were all compensated hourly through research funding sources in the university, arts organizations, and government organizations.

All drawings and models in this submission are by the design-research team. All exhibition / installation photographs are by Giorgio Lazzaro.
Reindeer herding, Inari, Finland.
Karahnjukar hydropower plant, Iceland.
Incinerator, Nuuk, Greenland.
Sealift, Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada.
Oil field, North Slope, Alaska, USA.
Iron ore mine, Kiruna, Sweden.
Mega cruise ship, Longyearbyen, Norway.
Open nickel mine, Norilsk, Russia.

CIRCUMPOLAR TERRITORIES
Contested Circumpolar Territories: Entangled Narratives

- Resource extraction, scientific research, hunting.
- Traditional life, research station, waste, logistics.
- Overcrowded houses, waste management, military.

§
§ 8 Nations as Domestic-Territory cores arranged as a Circumpolar Council.
Understanding the role of infrastructure and land in urban Arctic.

Understanding daylighting and actors unique to circumpolar domestic life.
Interview with Runa Svard, planner, Nuuk, Greenland

Runa Svard 0:00
Complex called the radio mountain translated the whole complex is with the larger blocks of flats and the terrorist housing in the middle and then you have this this part and this particular part is very sought after because it's from being social housing it's been sold off, it's private and a lot of those are owned by the I think it's called it called co-owned. I can find out how many there actually are and they contain each of them because I think it's owned by the government here. So the very words.

Interviewer 1:17
And do so would you say there are not many and maybe

Runa Svard 1:30
I would say that it's probably

Interviewer 1:38
Okay, it's in new as you probably mentioned, the population is indigenous and color the both ownership and rental in the same it's, it was not a Danish quarter.

Unknown Speaker 2:07
This is not this is not a typical Danish quarter. It's very mixed. Okay. And maybe some other quick words.

Runa Svard 2:32
Alright, so it's not waste collaboration. You can see the gray ones in front of the green ones in front of the brown ones in front of the green ones in front of the waste that you might not from Canada, storage is huge. Because of these seasonal activities whether it's storage or skiing storage is one of the things that we always say is never enough makes a European dwelling different from an optic that's the need for storage and also the entrance you need a large insurance for all the shoes and yes, we were so when Danish architects come here because it's mainly Danish and we will always tell them that that's specific needs such as more storage and a large entrance.

Interviewer 3:58
Would you say that there is maybe some questions about the interior. Would you say that there are qualities distinct to a Greenlandic interior and what would those qualities be? Is it the size of a room as you talked about an entry being larger, and the shed as a storage space for all seasons for fishing is very useful. Are there other kinds of interior qualities that are distinctive among Greenlanders and Greenlandic in your observations?

Interview with Shirley Tagalik, Arviat, Nunavut, Canada

Interviewer 33:02
What would you say defines domestic life in Arviat? Is it the house? Is it going out on the land? We recognize that the domestic isn’t always only the house or uniquely to house, so I’m curious to hear your thoughts are on that.

Shirley Tagalik 33:24
So for Arviat, it would definitely be family, family and extended family, and the activities that family are involved in. And so for some families that is going out on the land, other families may seldom go out on the land. You know, I remember teaching junior high kids in my early years in Arviat and was stunned to find out that they’ve never left a community because some families are so big, that you don’t have the wherewithal to haul your kids on the land. But it’s the idea that, you know, culturally, family is everything and that your obligations to family are still expected and practice. So my son in law would get nervous if they didn’t come to visit me, you know, in a day. The obligation is alright, at least once a day. COVID with a tinge that you’re checking in on elders oring food with people really, that you know, of how many reads in this community live. So our children also visit and surround and out of each other’s houses all the time definitely in the south, but probably even in bale disease capital of Nunavut.

Runa Svard

Interview with Shirley Tagalik, Arviat, Nunavut, Canada

Interviewer 33:24
And are there domestic objects or activities that are unique to your community or region? For instance, I was told by someone in Iqaluit, and I’m pretty sure they were talking about Arviat that there is a lot of visiting. Many of us arrive at your door, you always offer food. And, and there are many, many times when a family is going to visit they’re going to visit you, you know, in a day. The obligation is alright, at least once a day. COVID with a tinge that you’re checking on elders oring food with people really, that you know, of how many reads in this community live. So our children also visit and surround and out of each other’s houses all the time definitely in the south, but probably even in bale disease capital of Nunavut.
Exhibition view of Contested Circumpolar: Domestic Territories at 2021 Venice Biennale in Architecture.
In the 1960s, new apartments provided for mining employees were fitted out with the traditional Swedish saunas, however, these were often converted to storage space over time. A large public sauna was constructed in 2017 in Kiruna, called the solar egg, intended to serve as a social gathering for citizens.

The town of Kiruna, like so many regions of the Circumpolar North, owes its existence to mining. Recently the buildings of the town began to sink due to the mineral extraction. The government owned mining company LKAB is locating 6,000 people, or one third of the town, to enable mining to continue.

As part of the relocation of the town of Kiruna, two dozen historically significant buildings will be moved to the new town location, and over 300 buildings will be demolished. Kiruna has been demolishing buildings as the mine grew, but never at the scale necessary for this move.

Fuel is essential for life in isolated Longyearbyen, both for transportation and heating. Many homes keep a store of jerrycans for snowmobiles and ATVs, and they are an essential travel companion for backup fuel to not be stranded. Jerrycans can also be rented for researchers at the local stores.

Fishing is central to Greenland’s economy, employing nearly 12% of the population. Along with seal and whale meat, fish such as Greenland cod and Arctic char are rich in proteins and are an essential diet of Greenlanders and Greenlandic Inuit.

Blackout curtains are common in many parts of the Circumpolar North, to block out the long, nearly 20-23 hours of daylight at the height of summer. Nuuk experiences 21 hours of daylight during the summer solstice.

Seal, caribou, and whale remain crucial local food resources and cultural practices for Indigenous peoples in northern Canada and Alaska. Seal skin is prepared and stretched to make clothes, crafts, and umiak boats.

In many regions of the Arctic, running utility pipes underground is difficult due to permafrost. Instead, water and fuel are carried in a raised, heated conduit above ground called a utilidor. These exposed utilities in Nuuk are often linked with other infrastructure such as stairs or boardwalks.

The Ulu knife is a traditional Inuit tool used to scrape, clean and prepare animal hides, to make clothes and crafts. The steel blade is crest-shaped with a typically wooden or bone handle.

Freezers are used to store harvested country food after hunting, which is often shared among family and community members. Freezers can be small appliances, dedicated structures, or carved out of the permafrost below ground.

Largely reliant on dial-up and weak connections, Internet service in Arctic communities poses significant challenges to education, economic development and daily life. Discussions of an undersea fibre-optic network serving Arctic communities continues to be stalled.

Sami architect Joar Nango sees the Sami "adhocist" approach through a decolonial lens. As an example, traditional structures such as sleds are often made of repurposed materials, such as scrap metal.

Lack of sunlight during the long winter months means that artificial sources of UV light are needed to supplement vitamin D. "Ultraviolet baths" are especially important for children growing up in circumpolar communities.

All parts of the reindeer are used: meat and organs will be smoked, dried, and stored; antlers and bones are used to make tools and handicrafts; hides to make bags and garments.

Traditional Sami knives, whose handles are made from antlers, are used to butcher, cut trees and branches for firewood, to make tents, etc. For the Sami, the knife is also a status symbol reflecting the role in the community, with both men and women traditionally carrying one or more knives.

§ Domestic and Territorial "objects" as circumpolar footnotes.
DOMESTIC TERRITORIES

CONTESTED CIRCUMPOLAR

CIRCUMPOLAR LANDSCAPES

Inari, Finland.

Reyðarfjörður, Iceland.

Nuuk, Greenland.

Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada.

Utqiagvik, Alaska, USA.

Kiruna, Sweden.

Longyearbyen, Norway.

Norilsk, Russia.
Domestic-Territory cores unrolled to reveal entanglement of scales.
§ Reyðarfjörður, Iceland represents a worker camp for aluminum smelting and the larger.

§ Nuuk, Greenland represents the long modern housing blocks developed in the 1960s.
NARRATIVES OF CONTESTED CIRCUMPOLAR TERRITORIES

--- OPTION #2

Norilsk, Russia
Longyearbyen, Norway
Kiruna, Sweden
Reydarfjordur, Iceland
Utqiaqvik, USA
Inari, Finland
Iqaluit, Canada
Nuuk, Greenland

§ Circumpolar territorial narratives.
Domestic Territories of Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada.

Domestic Territories of Norilsk, Russia.

Articulating select “rooms” to reveal domestic life.

Domestic “footnotes” for each model.
Territorial narrative composites.
Norilsk, Russia.
Utqiagvik, Alaska represents housing along the permafrost and the front lines of climate change.
Exhibition views of models for Utqiagvik and Inari.
§ Exhibition view with Nuuk, Norilsk, Reyðarfjörður domestic-territory cores.