

# Hotel Polar Capital

# SAMI ART FESTIVAL

*in productive progression!*



# Hotel Polar Capital

Accounts from the Sámi Art Festival 2008–2011  
including texts or artistic works by

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Sámi Art Festival 2008–2011

Kirkenes

2011

# Hotel Polar Capital

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SAMI ART FESTIVAL  
*in productive progression!*

SDS  
Sámi Dáiddačehpiid  
Searvi

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# Foreword

THE SÁMI ART FESTIVAL previously held in 2002, consisted of an exhibition in Karasjok and Kirkenes, a film program, culture cafes, as well as a concert and the seminar *What is Sámi Art?* Presenting a minority of Sámi artists and a large number of non-Sámi artists, the festival extended the ethnological understanding of Sámi art. Starting from questions of identity, ethnicity and exoticism, ‘Sámi art’ was challenged and contextualized within contemporary art. The 2002 festival was curated by Geir Tore Holm.

We are creating a tradition with the Sámi Art Festival 2008–2011. Our point of departure has been the idea that art, as well as artistic formats, must be able to offer some kind of resistance. Therefore, we started by questioning the why and wherefore of a Sámi art festival—what is meant by ‘the Sámi’, what is a ‘festival’,—what is a ‘Sámi Art Festival’?

In a social context, the visualization of self-reflexivity, and the problematizing and questioning of that which is taken for granted are something that uniquely belongs to contemporary art. It reflects on its existence and tradition, creates nuances, and is a field where contradiction and openness are dissonantly reactive with that which is conclusive or result orientated elsewhere. In that sense, the Sámi Art Festival 2008–2011 has wanted to discuss the structures that underlie its milieu and extend the parameters of its own format.

There are festivals all over Norway—in small, local communities they serve to create an identity, promoting urbanity and the international, with a focus on entertainment, as part of the larger cultural industry. In a broader art context, the new multiplying biennials and festivals of art join in local politics with a similar view of improving the competitive edge of certain places or regions relative to others. Festivals also serve to popularize and draw attention to (problems of) stigmatized and invisible social groups.

Taking as our point of origin sparsely populated areas where ‘the institution of contemporary art’ is weak; we took our time and scaled down. By thinking—how does art participate here in these northern regions?—we lengthened the duration of the festival to three years and adopted a more dialectical approach to several situations. By letting the festival happen almost unobtrusively in different places, we sought to avoid bolstering the gentrification of places (local culture, thematics, etc.), or serving as an ‘agent of change’ and thus asserting a specific political cause in a public sphere awash with causes.

‘To participate’ has crystallized the contents into something more definite as well as subtle. Armed with certain ideas about who might be interesting partners and what our possibilities for action would be, we proposed a number of ‘tasks’ that were developed. That left us with certain key words about contents—*autonomy*, *trauma* and *market*. Having turned the festival into a slowly-evolving, unobtrusive affair, as well as cooperating with different people associated with a variety of issues, there can be no unifying concept or monolithic understanding. In a larger perspective, this was unintended, ambiguity and divergence were not our aim as such.

Representative is our last effort, *Hotel Polar Capital* which introduces the different projects within the Sámi Art Festival 2008–2011. It includes materials from oral or artistic expressions that were produced for previous elements of the festival, and also presents artistic contributions and articles from invited artists and theorists.

We would like to thank those who have helped us solve the tasks of the festival, and all the participants at the festival—artists, theorists, partners, hosts and trouble-shooters, as well as those who have supported the festival financially.

*Hilde Methi and Kristin Tårnesvik*





# Land and Water Rights

Artistic research

June 10, 2008–March 10, 2010

Of special interest to this work is the new legislation, The Finnmark Act, that in 2006 replaced the state ownership of resources in the county of Finnmark, Norway. People were now able to celebrate freedom from the ‘colonizers’ in the South. Some argue that the legislation in fact opens up opportunities for privatization and the market. This is especially true for the political left that traditionally has supported the Sámi fight for rights over the past decades.

This artistic research by Geir Tore Holm (Norway) resulted in the film *Vuoigatvuodát eatnamiidda ja čáziide / The Right to Land and Water*. The film is based on interviews with people who are affected by and have opinions about the Finnmark Act; managers, lawyers, politicians, historians, activists, artists and users. These various viewpoints are voiced by one man, working in the forest. Traditional, local knowledge meets formalized opinions on legislation and public regulations for the use of land and water. The interviews took place in the counties Finnmark and Troms (Norway) in 2009. *Vuoigatvuodát eatnamiidda ja čáziide* had its premiere at the festival exhibition Collective Matters in Trondheim 2010, and later showing in Holm’s *Vedbilder* (Wood Images) in Oslo Museum; Interkulturelt Museum, where he co-organized the seminar *Landscape Images and Construction of Concepts* as a part of the MA-program for Visual Arts at Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

Videostils and script:

## Vuoigatvuodát eatnamiidda ja čáziide / The Right to Land and Water

Geir Tore Holm

For the best firewood, fell the trees before Midsummer. By a crescent moon.

Then leave it to dry over the summer with twigs still on and only some strips in the bark. Next, it is time to delimb the wood, stack it, drive it home, cut, chop, and prepare it for the winter. Ideally, it should be from birch trees. Tall birches. Rowan also makes for good, solid firewood. Wood from trees like alder burns too fast. It shouldn't be too dry, either. 15% humidity is optimal.

I notice that the kids and the wife can have fun with things I don't find particularly funny. Even though I'm the man of the house. King of my own castle. But not always the master of language.

That's just the way it is. You don't eat dried meat in January, and you don't eat dried meat in June, either. Then you eat salmon, once it makes its way up the river. And everyone who takes part in the fishing gets a piece of fish.

This works the same way as the map in my head. We all carry maps in our heads.



That's why some places are right, while others are not. I don't want to gather berries in other people's areas. Heck, what business do I have there? No. The same goes for fishing lakes. They belong to so and so. There are many places where I have no business. To have some business there, that's what it's about. But nobody owns the territories. Not even our Lord. What we do have is the right to use them. Not to own them.

This is changing now—everything is changing. The very moment you go to the frozen-goods counter rather than into the mountains, everything changes. We used to always need an errand to go to the mountains. You had to gather or harvest something or other. Follow the seasons.

To a great extent, this is also about human compassion.

When I'm out in the mountains where I usually go and see strangers there, I immediately walk up to them to find out what kind of people they are. In the city, you would have walked past them, but here, I go straight up to ask where they are from, where they are going and to whom they are related.

I walk over to find out who is entering my domain. Who is the guest here?

The world is changing. If everybody related only to the road passing by the house and not to the mountain behind it, what would we have to pass on? How do we look at the world? That is what needs to be passed along.

I don't get upset when I see a snow scooter track; they are great to ski in. Crosscountry skiing. That's recreation. Contentment. And we need to







be content. That law applies to all of us, regardless where we come from in the world.

Now, let's return to history. It came to a face-off. To taking back one's history.

I should have become a fisherman, but the fathers chased their sons away from the sea back when I was young. Even so, my father managed to communicate a joy in it. He was a fighter, a member of the trade union and class conscious.

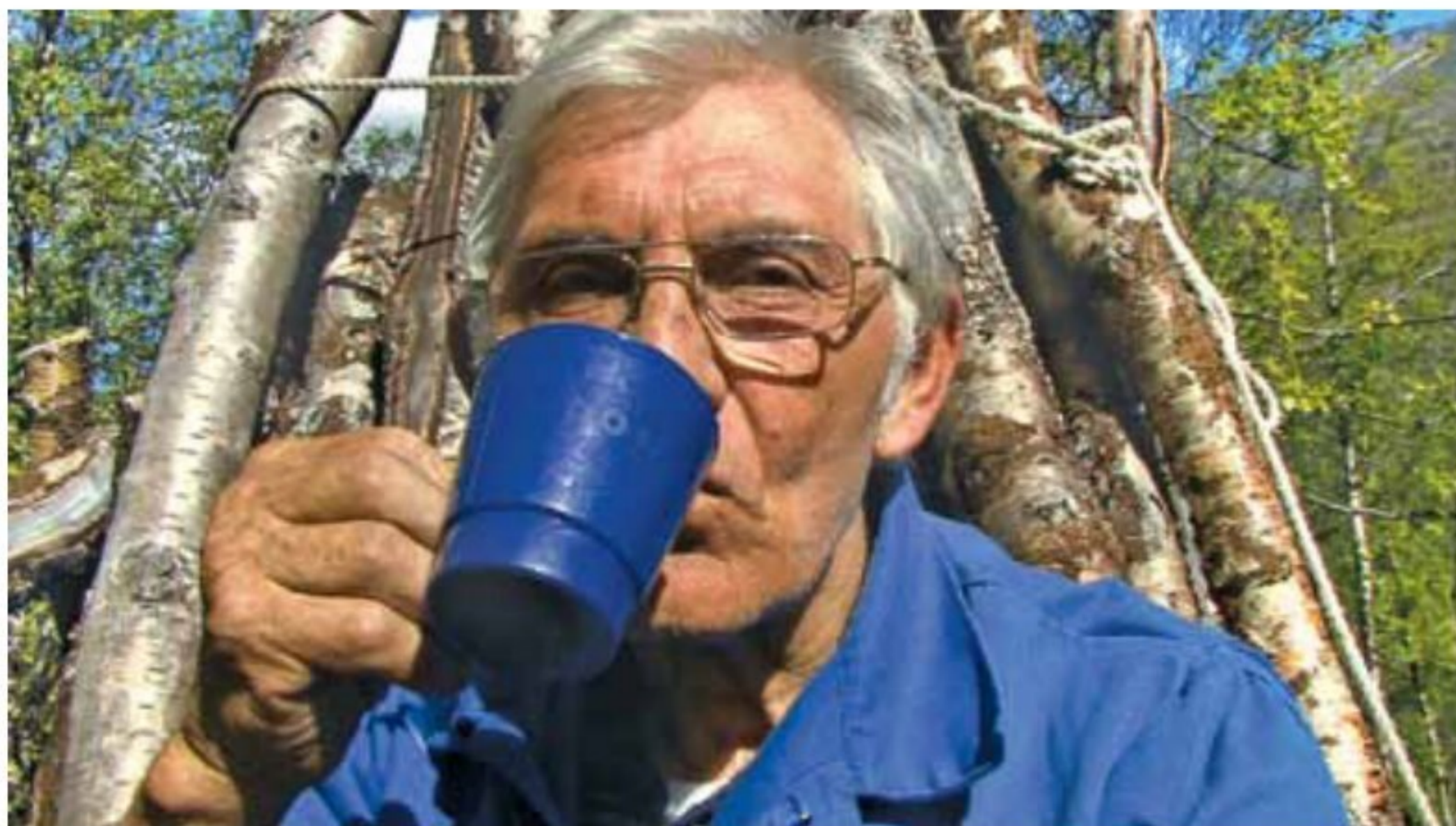
I had to go out fishing. To see if I was a man. To see if the sea was my friend.

So, the wheel of history has rolled over us. Remedying old injustices is impossible.

Nowhere can that be done. Injustice has occurred everywhere. Unfairness. Fathers. Sons.

I thought the ocean belonged to all of us and that the land had no private owners. Now my sense of justice feels violated. My relationship to mountains and sea has been assaulted. When I see a mountain in the south, I see property. Now I'm seeing greed, ownership and mortal sin up here in the north, too. And the law protects proprietary rights. The authorities do not care about us. The legislative and the executive powers are one and the same. This is contempt for people. We've been had. People are fucked. The earth is fucked. The ocean is fucked.

We are suffering from some damned romanticism. Producing commodities for the rich down south, that's what we're doing.



There is contempt for the people, and profound changes are taking place. We need no traditions here. We need to distance ourselves, cut ties and move mountains. Not be second-class citizens. We don't need history, and the wheel of history has rolled over us. We need more than identity.

I was born and raised where we are now. And when I return here, it feels as though the ring has come full circle.

I wanted to draw. I was going to become a draftsman designing power plants.

Instead, I ended up painting pictures that were landscapes. The landscape I remembered inside me.

Then the fight for land and water began. This is so much a matter of who you are. As a human being. It has to do with the fight to be the human being that you are.

We did not want to be beggars in our own house anymore. No more bowing and scraping. The history was to be ours.

We called each other brothers and sisters. We were tiny birds, together.

Fleeing from the war. It had ruined everything. Sent everybody on the run. Razed everything to the ground.

Then I took up writing. I had never written anything in my own language before. I had to learn everything from scratch. Get letters and sounds to match. Translate images into words. Capture in descriptions what surrounds me. Write down that birds were staring with dead eyes and the mountains weeping.

The mountains are weeping now. There used to be plenty of fish, now there is hardly any life at all. The fjord is dead. The seaweed is gone. The graylag goose doesn't come to the marshland anymore. The forest is black. Eaten through by worms.

Some blame it on the reindeer. It ruins everything! A lady who was interviewed on TV chastised the authorities for not doing anything about it! But the winters just aren't cold enough.

I'm glad there are still berries. Cloudberries, blueberries, lingonberries, I've got them all here. Jam every morning.

But everything is changing.

I'm trying to write it down. Starting with a word, then sentences. And it all takes place in landscapes. Not in enclosed rooms with walls, floors and ceilings, but out in the open landscape. As in a merged state.

I believe school has done a lot of harm. I started in school, but was used to being listened to. Then came obedience and discipline. Not allowed to talk when I felt like it. Schedules. Homework.

We must demand human rights for kids. The right to be a human being is what it really means. The right to be dirty, ugly, and angry.

Unless, of course, you become the teacher's pet. Then the price may be that the other kids will start hating you.

That's how it started. With me asking warped questions.

Growing up, I learned that you had to take gnomes and goblins into consideration. We had to ask their permission for various things. Once again, I felt squeezed between different systems. One system said that unless you put up a fence around your property, it isn't yours. But the goblins said that if you build a fence here, you're going to have to deal with us.

Then I got caught by a deity concept where I have been used as a rhetorical, political means, even though I do not take care of my environment, but beat my wife and abuse my kids. But I am a vehicle for society's dreams. Like having a mission.

And so I make demands. I claim my rights. Then it becomes formal, translated into distribution criteria and procedures for how to go about it.

It is like building a house and forgetting to make windows. 'Oh, no problem, not at all, there will be light inside. We'll just get a bag and grab some from outside.'

Brilliant idea, it is just that the bag won't work to bring light inside.

That's how it is: we were given bags, but are unable to capture what is essential. To the little man and to the little woman. That is the dilemma of

the little man and the little woman.

Then there is a bit of burning. The fire crackles, as do other things. Like the language of forms. And deadlines. Language becomes something different and time becomes different. You do not master the language. You do not master time.

It is all about being able to push the right buttons. Make headway. Like Prime Minister Churchill. Great at war, but not in a country at peace. Different types are called forth to different scenarios. To different collectives. We are called to our little community; to the Nation; Europe; the World; the Universe.

But so much is ruled by financial class and social hierarchies. Have you, your people and your country received the royal seal of approval? Have you become the King's property?

The way we understand our history and identity is similar to molecular biology.

Levels of understanding. Levels of levels. Levels of right and wrong. The right to the land and the water. Inside a cell.

What can we take with us to the grave? What do we need in the afterlife? What do we need when we face the unknown and go into our tombs? Fur coats? Jewels? Dried meat? Salted fish? Berries? Potatoes? Firewood?

We don't burn that much firewood anymore. Only 20% of what we used to go through. Before we got a heat pump installed. Panasonic. A comfortable heat at 20°C around the clock. Less smoke and pollution. Now we just light a fire to get some life inside the house. You've got to burn some wood, you know.



# Proximity to the Means of Production

Boel Christensen-Scheel

— *Thus the role of art is to provide the senses of the individual with the opportunity for self-expression in everyday reality in order that human beings recover their grasp of their own history and development.*

*Knut Astrup Bull<sup>1</sup>*

Natural science, handicraft, beauty, ecology and use—you have to be able to hold several ideas in your mind simultaneously if you want to take on the challenge of contemporary art. Both Geir Tore Holm's *Wood Images* ('Murragovat') and Yvette Brackman and Hilde Methi's shoe project LUJA in Lovozero/LUJAvri on the Kola Peninsula provide us with multiple possible intentions and functions: Holm uses photo and video to link natural beauty to management, history of use and identity. Brackman and Methi organize workshops where local women and men sew shoes and work together on art and handicraft in an attempt to strengthen their livelihoods. Both projects employ both artistic and organizational approaches—they sew and talk, portray and negotiate, aestheticize and concretize. Thus, art becomes a space of greater freedom than other processes, a conceptual framing that—in part eluding ordinary logic—provides the opportunity for creating meeting places and more nuanced histories. The art of it lies in the formal expressions, in images of nature and beautifully worked up leather, but it is also a matter of simply ordinary and familiar processes, materials around us, which we may no longer care about because we have never shaped them ourselves.

Holm's wood images are appealingly down to earth, as fresh, solid and basic as the birch trunks he is showing us. A kind of aestheticizing

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<sup>1</sup> Bull, Knut Astrup, *En ny diskurs for kunsthåndverket*, (A New Discourse for Handicraft) Akademisk Forlaget, Unipax, Oslo, 2007, p. 32. Refers to a presentation of Karl Marx's perspectives on art.

*From the series Wood Images ('Muorragovat'), Geir Tore Holm, 2010*







of nature and of what is natural is taking place, with an ecological message built into the project. The logger, whose interior 'polylog' on the use of nature we are privy to in the accompanying video, encroaches upon and reduces sacred nature with his chainsaw. However, in Holm's world human beings are also a part of nature, and the nearly manual logging is a far cry from the industrial clear cutting of large forest areas. The work of the logger can be seen as a direct relationship with the natural world and materiality surrounding him, and even if—ethically speaking—it may be difficult to judge to whom nature belongs, it is particularly the many possible relationships with nature that are highlighted.

In Brackman and Methi's *LUJA* project, we find a similar discussion dealing with human production both as a source of livelihood and identity. *LUJA* is a village with the collective TUNDRA system established in the communist Russia of the 1930's and thus, the how and why of production are inextricably part of the network of social, historical and economic circumstances. With or without the artistic context, the project can be viewed as a social and cultural activator; individuals with their particular knowledge and expertise are called upon and brought together in a group dedicated to a shared project: shoe and handicraft production based on local traditions (Sami, Nenets, and Komi). *LUJA* thus encompasses both micro, meso and macro levels: the production and history of the individual (micro) as seen in the larger context of the region's history and traditions (meso), along with the idea of craft as the source of livelihood and therefore not without political significance in a more general overarching sense (macro).

#### NEO-EXISTENTIALISM AND BASIC NEEDS AS ARTIST/HUMAN BEING

The role of the artist in the 20th and 21st century has become increasingly complex—from artisan to artist, philosopher and activist, then conceptualist, organizer and moderator, then back to artisan but now preferably combining it with the role of project manager. From questioning the function of the object and the function of art, artists have had to question their own function; if meaning no longer inheres solely in the object and if we already gave up on the idea of genius long ago, what possible role is really open to the artist? In what I have called neo-existentialism, I attempt to describe such a frame of mind or situation where the artist acts as a human being and creates an existence as an artist through the use of various media and

tools.<sup>2</sup> Neo-existentialism may be described as the post-structuralist grandchild of existentialism, that is, it continues the existentialist project with the individuality and possibilities of the individual as its central concerns; but now the emphasis on individual existence is toned down in favor of a more social and less predictable situation understood in terms of a perspective inspired by the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>3</sup> In terms of art history in its more classical sense, the projects *Wood Images* and *LUJA* may be seen as a further development of the art object in a more social direction whereby 'the object' becomes social or as multimedia projects, it acquires thematics tied to nature and indigenous peoples. However, the emphasis on the existential perspective orients the projects more directly toward social production generally; they are made to grapple with the problems of the avant-garde associated with the reality and political function of art,<sup>4</sup> but also with the problems of something as fundamental as the everyday reality of the individual and the relationship to such basic conditions as work and the physical environment.

#### THE CRITICAL POTENTIAL OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Nevertheless, we have to raise the question of whether these projects can become more than 'art' or do they remain individual ideas on display in a semi-collective space? The often complex preparations, material and contextual analyses of the artists are typically not available to the regular member of the audience. We are in the habit of finding art compelling only to the degree that it shocks or provokes censorship; thus—for many—shock and censorship remain the response we should aim for. Occasionally, an image or picture will have concrete, political repercussions as it did in 1965 when Kjartan Slette-mark's Vietnam pictures sowed the seeds of opposition to the Vietnam War.<sup>5</sup> At other times—perhaps after seeing a new theater production or performance event—we may feel the need to re-evaluate our view of what constitutes sexual inhibition. But society rarely provides us with the opportunity to think of art as

<sup>2</sup> Christensen-Scheel, Boel, *Mobile Homes—Aspects of Situatedness and De-Situatedness in Contemporary Performative Practice and Theory*, Ph.D thesis, Oslo, Acta Humaniora/Unipub, 2009, p. 225 and 'Mobile Homes', *Peripeti* no. 14, Denmark, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus*, London, Continuum, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, Hannah Higgins' *Fluxus Experience*, University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 2002, or Mikkel Bolt's *The Last Avant-garde*, Rævens Sorte Bibliotek, Copenhagen, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Godbolt, James, *Den norske vietnambevegelsen (The Norwegian Vietnam Movement) 1967–1973*, dr. philos.-thesis, Acta Humaniora no. 328, Unipub, University of Oslo, 2008.



*From the series Wood Images ('Muorragovat'), Geir Tore Holm, 2010*



having a function beyond crossing formal boundaries, as actually being a field of action in its own right beyond museums and institutions, and as a discriminating approach based on other rules of logic and values.

As a consequence, many contemporary artists are now heading up projects, having an impact not only within their own sphere but also actively negotiating with politicians, various institutions and groups within society. They want to use sensory and nuanced perspectives as part of the process of social change and work with design that is meaningful at a basic human level and to themselves as artists. This may be the reason why craft and handicraft have achieved a new significant standing in the production of contemporary art; textiles and knitting, jewelry and ceramics, hand-blown glass and whittled wooden figures, traditional cooking, herb cultivation and plant science now show up quite regularly at art venues. For not only does it feel like institutional ambitions and meta-perspectives may have become too removed from the bodies of both artists and spectators but the very forms and material may be perceived as alienated in the international commercial and institutionalized production process. The need of the artist to regain control as organizer and project manager is thus only an indication of what production level the process has moved to, that is, what factors now have to be controlled in order to affect the production of the sensory result.

As a parallel development to the professionalization of the artist as manager and the attempt to elevate the artistic field as a productive social field, there is an emphasis on the corresponding 'non-pro' material, by which is meant—not poor or less good but rather non-industrialized, personal production. In old craft techniques we find not only beauty and knowledge but also personal histories and physical proximity to the aesthetic material itself. And precisely this close proximity provides the basis for a way of relating to formal use that in many respects is more sustainable than the industrial variant. Not because it does not pay in particular cases to produce something in another country or to optimize certain resources but because close physical and psychological contact with the material, form and production process creates greater involvement with the product, read artist. Thus, close proximity to the means of production is not simply a Marxist blast from the past—it is a description of human survival strategies in an age when the management of materials is normally greatly removed from us and is likely to remain so.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Terry Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, or Richard Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London 1998.

## THE RADICANT AND THE SAMI

And this is where the consideration of ‘the perspective of indigenous people’ may become relevant in enabling us to use craft techniques in order to recover a closer contact with the aesthetic process of production both as artists and as spectators. It is, however, essential—as the theorist of art and contemporary philosopher Nicolas Bourriaud points out in his latest book *The Radicant* (2009)<sup>7</sup>—that in evaluating ‘minority cultural’ contributions, we adopt a shared global and multinational perspective rather than engage in inter-cultural discourses; this is critically important both in the case of indigenous culture or the culture of countries lacking in financial resources like India and Sudan. Bourriaud argues that the art of ‘foreign cultures’ will take on the appearance of greater foreignness and cultural dependence if we do not recognize all expressions as equally worthy of praise or blame in terms of the central and dominant contemporary discourse. Unless we adopt the perspective of recognizing the value of difference in terms of equality, the position of foreignness as foreign and the position of minority as minority will be reinforced. That does not mean—albeit this may be the weakness of the argument—that all produce the same things the same way but that Sami and Indian art—in the light of day—must stand up to the same scrutiny as Jeff Koons and Bjarne Melgaard. Not until then will individual expressions be recognized on a par with (heretofore culturally) dominant expressions we should aim to encourage difference within the central discourse rather than create separate ‘minority cultural’ discourses. Like the strawberry plant, we have to become radicant, both superficial and subterraneously shooting out roots, both upholding traditions and being contemporaneously oriented. This is where ‘Wood Images’ and ‘LUJA’ succeed, both as contemporary art and distinctive culture—they are part of the larger complex of issues related to craft, materiality and related aesthetics but also proof of a culture that values nature and materiality as an aesthetic as well as an existential foundation.

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<sup>7</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas, *The Radicant*, Sternberg Press, New York, 2009.



# LUJA

Yvette Brackman



LUJA is an art project, that is conceptualized as a product development and distribution enterprise and it contains all the forms customarily associated with a business. LUJA consists of *Cast*, *LUJA.nu*, *Kangin*, *Service*, *Display*, *Shop* and *Company* (all 2010). The LUJA design collective is a group of highly skilled artisans based in and around the village of LUJAvri/Lovozero (Kola Peninsula, Russia) who make items from reindeer fur, leather, bones, etc. The aim of this project is to develop a platform for local and global dialogue on a small scale, which seeks to maintain the parameters of intimacy in the production and distribution of indigenous design.

LUJA is rooted in raising questions about 'inspiration', indigenous rights and copyright. Dwelling on themes of Russian Constructivist design with its concentration on art into production modes, these works explore some paradoxes faced by indigenous cultures confronted by conflicts inherent in the right to be inspired and innovate. The core of LUJA is to envision a local enterprise of sustainable indigenous design initially as an artwork in order to illuminate the real conditions of production and cultural survival of marginalized and exoticised cultures, and as a means for self-sufficiency. A previous attempt to facilitate a collaboration between a global shoe company and the artisans, served as a motivating impetus for LUJA. This initial effort failed in the sense that collaboration between the parties was never formalized. A narrative account of these negotiations was elaborated into a performance and a play, *The Catalyst*.



THE LUJA WORKS INCLUDE:

*Display* includes textile banners, logo and furniture for the LUJA products.

The display structures, LUJA logo and textile elements function as a display place for the LUJA design collective's reindeer skin products.

*Company* is a video using documentary footage from two original workshops arranged with the artisans and a designer. *Company* is a silent film that adapts Dziga Vertov's *Kino Pravda* editing and textual techniques to tell about real events.

*Service* is six sets of porcelain tea sets: four cups and saucers and a teapot per set.

Inspired by the manner in which pastoral reindeer herders carry their porcelain tea sets with them to the TUNDRA, these porcelain tea sets commemorate the reindeer herders and artisans of LUJAvri. The motifs are a combination of Sami pictograms, Hobo signs, and geometrical abstraction.

*The Cast* (porcelain and stoneware sculptures) is a staged installation with porcelain figures representing roles from the performance, *The Catalyst*. The cast and Chorus of the play stand observing their audience from the stage. These minimal totemic forms are 'mental spaces' addressing memory, loss and revival.

Another aspect of LUJA deals with production and dissemination models of boots and other handmade reindeer products. This is an on-going collaboration with the curator, Hilde Methi.

In 2010, *Kangin*, referring to an indoor boot, was made by Marianne Britt Jørgensen, Anna Galkina, Alla Vasileva and several others. We invited Marianne Britt, a Danish designer, to make a basic prototype inspired by the traditional Eastern Sami summer boot from Kola Peninsula and to present her design to the local artisans who reworked the boot adding and altering details, within a realm of a mutual exchange of ideas. The right to the design is collective between the LUJA group and Marianne Britt.

LUJA.NU is a webshop/blog presenting information about the project. *Shop* is a salon-style store showcasing the designs of the artisans. These sites provide for the exchange of narratives about ethnicity, geopolitics, ecology, ethics and copyright. The idea of commerce as a format for mediation between art and knowledge production is being explored.

*Photos by Vigdis Hautro*



*From the installation The Cast (Chorus)*



*Kangin by Anna Galkina*



*Kangin by Maria Popova and Marianne Britt Jørgensen*



*Kangin by Tatyana Koshevina*



*Traditional boots made by Anna Galkina*

The Specialist introduces herself and the company for which she works.



Due to rumors spread by The Insurgent some of The Choir chose to leave the workshop but some stay and the work continues.



A new attempt to make traditional reindeer products for a global market was started in 2009.



*Videostils from Company*



# Collective Matters

Exhibition, interventions and presentations

April 14–May 5, 2010

— *The victory of materialism in Russia resulted in the complete disappearance of all matter.*

*The poet Andrej Belyj's famous comment on the 1920s condition of Russia after Revolution and Civil War*

COLLECTIVE MATTERS consists of eleven artistic projects, with twenty participants, from six countries in Europe. The making of Sámpí, the creation of the Barents Region and consistently new High North agendas served as a backdrop to reflect on the collective—what are the structures constituting the landscape? What creates the commonalities? Sensible notions on the collective,—what are the boundaries, systems, and what is shared, were on display.

Participants: Aksel Rudolf Wegner Buljo (Norway), Geir Tore Holm (Norway), Erkki Kurenniemi (Finland), Marysia Lewandowska (United Kingdom/Sweden/Poland), Mark Leckey (United Kingdom), Joar Nango (Norway), Peter Stoffel (Switzerland), Morten Torgersrud (Norway), Kristin Tårnesvik (Norway) and Julita Wójcik (Poland), LUJA; Marianne Britt Jørgensen (Denmark), Anna Galkina, Tatjana Galkina, Anna Igontova, Maria Kalmykova, Tatjana Koshevina, Maria Popova, Vladimir Selutin, Ludmila Tymotsjenko, Alla Vasileva (Russia), Yvette Brackman (Denmark/USA) and Hilde Methi (Norway).

The project took place in Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art. LUJA shop was arranged in Fjordgata 40. Presentations were held April 15, by Morten Torgersrud, Geir Tore Holm, Marysia Lewandowska, Yvette Brackman, Anna Galkina and Hilde Methi.

*Scenes from Every Land* (2007), by Peter Stoffel, is a reprint of the book *Scenes from Every Land*, published by the National Geographic Society in 1912. When the artist discovered the book at a flea market, most of the pictures had been meticulously cut out. In the reprint, the out-cuts are replaced by sheets of paper, and those grey-white, 'empty' pages appear as almost non-images, the remaining captions serving as mysterious false trails. This raises questions about the text and its dominance of the image, and the image as a kind of invisibility. The work may be read as a critical reflection about the representation of people, places, and scenery, historicized by the way the age of empire presented the world and foreign cultures. It may also be seen as the artist's reflection on his own practice being a landscape painter.

In Morten Torgersrud's publication and text, *Photographing Sápmi* (2010), the relationship between photography and place becomes a model which questions (ideas about) identity, belonging and rights in connection with political changes in the (understanding of) the northern landscape. The publication contains 372 photographs which he shot in Sápmi and the Barents Region, presenting the landscape as a collection of separate places, a formal, anti-monumental representation that treats places with an almost troublingly utopian egalitarianism, emphasizing the relationships between the photographs themselves and the places they depict. In his text, Torgersrud describes two local photographic projects that have taken place in the north in the past. The project suggests that rather than giving a representation of it, the photograph is a tool that colludes in the economic and political production of territorial concepts.

*Vuoigatvuodat eatnamiidda ja čáziide* (The Right to Land and Water)—an embodiment of societal and economic conditions, is a film by Geir Tore Holm from 2010. The protagonist is a man who is out logging. His mind turns to the relationship between the use of nature, natural resources and ownership of land and water, in diverging and sometimes paradoxical thoughts. Evoking complexities of indigenesness as well as labour, the film takes as its starting point the new and continuously disputed law, the Finnmark Act. With the act, 'the Sámi have collectively and individually acquired rights to land in Finnmark'. The narrative is a crosscutting of interviews with people who are affected by and have opinions about the act.

*Species of wasps and parasites in South Varanger 2009* are photographs by Aksel Rudolf Wegner Buljo. Buljo is an amateur biologist and photographer, and the sample photographs of wasps and parasites in the Sør-Varanger Municipality from 2009 are classic nature photographs. Since the 1970s Buljo has photographed, registered and catalogued thousands of insects in his municipality. He operates with a self-imposed mission to look after and draw attention to that which he thinks people consider a nuisance or that we hardly notice, but which plays an important role in the ecosystem. He is tracking 'undiscovered' species that reference works have no name for, or he registers which species disappear from their micro biotopes.







*Wavy block / Falowiec* by Julita Wójcik (2005–2006) is a drawing (12 × 0,4 m) that represents a floor plan (and a pattern for a crochet model) of the longest apartment block in Gdansk, probably also of the entire former Eastern Europe. The apartment block was built in the years 1970–1973, and more than 6000 people live there. The ironic-sentimental emphasis on this block, a monument of the everyday, evokes issues of the former East-West nexus, the ideology of collectivism and social modernist architecture, still present, but rather ignored and fading with the shift towards the market-based economy. The functional aspects of the drawing evoke association to handicrafts and home-production.



*Standardo* (2009) by Joar Nango is a pile of 100 flat pack cardboard boxes which visitors may take home. The box can be assembled and used for storage. When the box has been assembled, the text Monument of Fading Memory can be read. As a functional container, the box contrasts with that which differentiates itself by design. It also contrasts the time-consuming elements of traditional handmade production. Associated with monumentality, the work suggests simple, low-key things, evoking associations the DIY mentality, characteristic of built environments in the north.





Mark Leckey's video *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* (1999) consists of original and found footage from discos and 'raves' in England from the seventies, eighties and nineties. Out of three decades' worth of suburban youth culture, dance emerges as a ritual search for a higher form of collective existence. The film begins with the 1970s' disco scene, visits Northern Soul of the late seventies and early eighties, reaching its climax with the rave scenes of the nineties. At a certain point one dancer's bird-tattoo 'flies' into the next independent sequence, filmed by another young dancer. Some dance in slow motion, others in a loop for a few seconds. One music track runs through the whole film, creating a connecting narrative.

Yvette Brackman's *The Catalyst* (play) and *The Cast* (installation) are part of a series that reflects and discusses her work in the village of LUJAvri/Lovozero in Russia. Since 2005, she has been travelling there to work with a group of local craftspeople, initially inviting a global shoe company to collaborate with the craftspeople to develop a handmade reindeer skin shoe. The story of that project is presented in the play *The Catalyst: a learning-play in the Brechtian tradition*. *The Cast* consists of porcelain objects that represent the different roles in *The Catalyst* performance.





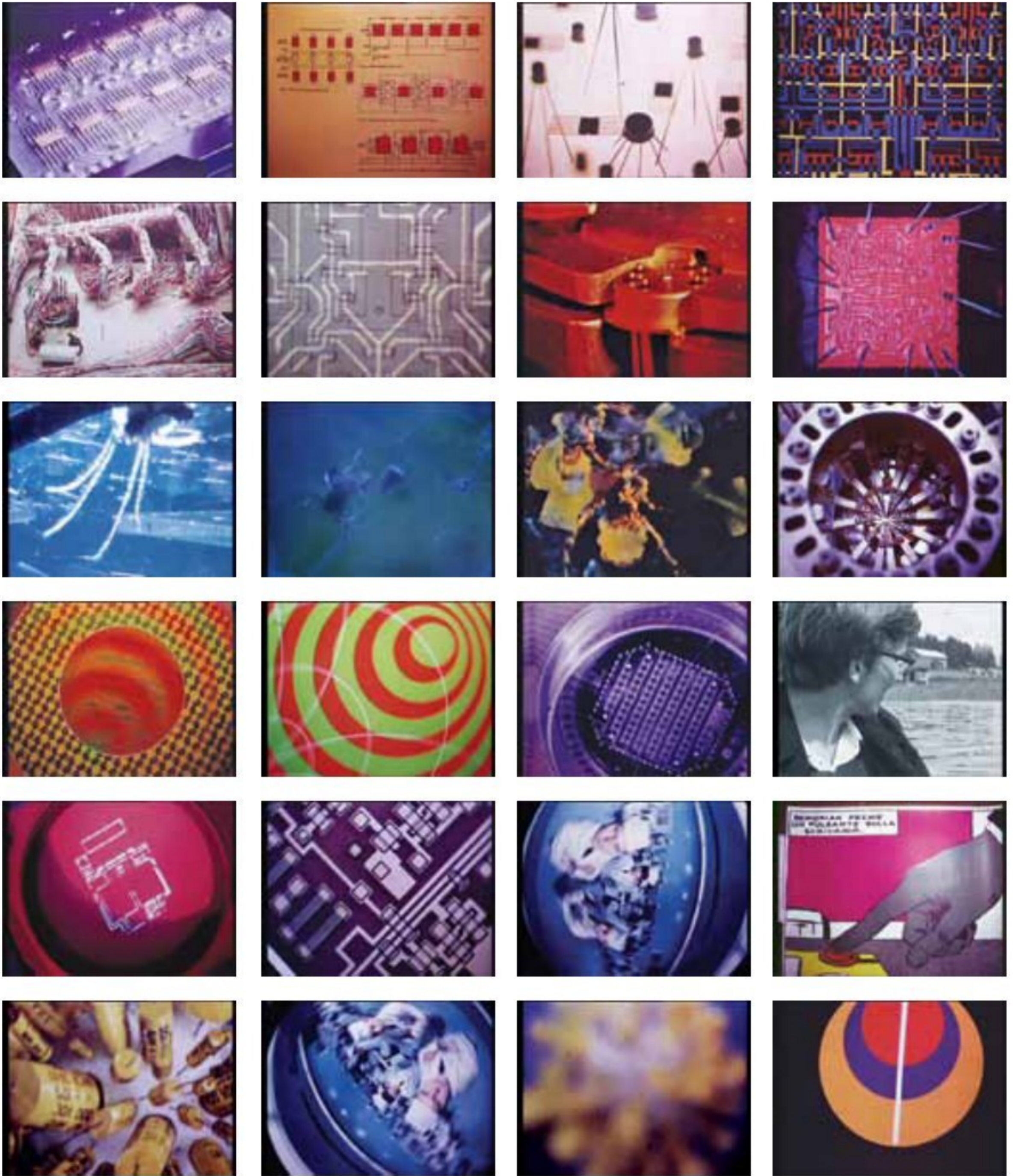
*The Annual Threat Report, vol. 8* (2010), by Kristin Tårnesvik, consists of 5 posters and a neon sign with the words Report it. This work recreates the notice board, bringing out activist aesthetics. One of the posters takes as its point of departure the Sami fight for the Alta-Kautokeino River. Another is a reprint of the 2009 annual report on threats by the Police Security Service PST (the Norwegian equivalent of the UK's MI5), which declares that the high North, with its resource extraction and technological development, must be protected from the threat of terrorism. What is the fight for people's rights compared to the tales of expert commissions?



*Double Act. 1917* by Marysia Lewandowska (2010) takes the form of a speculative pamphlet. The booklet consists of found pictorial material as well as a manuscript written by Lewandowska where two events of 1917 are connected through their proximity in time – the first Sami conference in Trondheim and the February Revolution in Russia. The protagonists of the play are based on Elsa Laula Renberg, a Sami writer and activist, and Alexandra Kollontai, a Russian activist. The project explores the introduction of the media into the writing of history and searches out ‘unproductive’ moments in history, looking for their possible relevance to present day discussions in Sami communities and elsewhere.

Erkki Kurenniemi’s film, *Electronics of the World of Tomorrow*, is part of a series of experimental 16 mm films covering the years 1964–70, focusing on machines, electronics and nature. Originally, this was meant to be realized as a composition of new electronic music, a project that was never completed. The film recalls Futurism’s movement, man and the machine, the presence and past within the future, as a mysterious prophecy in view of the high technology of our day.

*All overview images are photographed by Vigdis Haugtrø*







# Art Between Ethnic Politics and Capital Flow

Discussion-workshop, February 19–23, 2009

Participants: Marysia Lewandowska (artist, United Kingdom), Joar Nango (architect, Norway), Andrea Phillips (art theorist, United Kingdom), Åsa Sonjasdotter (artist, Germany/Norway), Kristin Tårnesvik (artist, Norway). Organizers: Morten Torgersrud (artist, Norway) and Hilde Methi (curator, Norway).



— *It's a difference between being a distraction or the oil lubricating the machinery.*

*Åsa*

The workshop took place in Inari (Finland) and Kirkenes (Norway). Its aim was a consideration of the political, economic, and cultural contexts that contemporary art need to negotiate when working within the current northern context. The first day began with a guided tour of the cultural-historical Siida Sámi Museum in Inari. Two presentations were 'set up' in this context to problematize relations between contemporary art and the culture industry.

Architect Joar Nango introduced the participants to Sámi architecture. Joar's presentation was based upon his work of making visible and discussing architecture through his publication/fanzine series *Sámi huksendaidda*. Here he focused on frequently used symbols and the visual expression of Sámi culture in architecture. He also spoke about his research on both vernacular architecture and also newer monumental architecture where Joar has coined the phrase 'giant lavvu syndrome' to describe conical architecture that seems to spread across Sápmi. Of particular interest in the following discussion were issues of continuity versus discontinuity/breaks within the field of architecture.

Kristin Tårnesvik mainly presented performance and photographic works. Kristin spoke of her experiences of being a Sámi artist, as defined both by herself and by the contemporary art system. But also how these have been defining points for her art as it has been shown both within a Sámi context and outside of it. Kristin's work, *Mein Kampf*, is emblematic, in this case, and will probably remain a reference point when it comes to exploring this problematic in Sámi contemporary art.

In the last presentation of the day, Marysia Lewandowska presented the project, *The Value of Things*, which she made together with Neil Cummings. The project investigates connections between display in commercial and museum contexts. More concretely, the project looked at display in the retail store Selfridge's and in the British Museum (both located in London). Issues touched upon were the production of 'value' and the museum's relation to a larger economy. Thus, the project constructs a connection between the commercial context and the museum as a market oriented structure.

The second day began in the offices of the Barents Institute in Kirkenes, where Margrethe Alnes from the Barents Secretariat presented the Barents Cooperation and its history. Margrethe spoke about different kinds of projects that the secretariat supports in the fields of culture, environment, indigenous people, competence and business. She also presented the fairly new BarentsKult funding program, which is set up to fund cross-border

culture projects. Margrethe received several questions about the political-economic aspects of the Barents cooperation, especially in relation to resource problematics and oil/gas issues.

This session was followed by Hilde Methi's presentation of projects that she had been running while working in the cultural production group *Pikene på Broen* in Kirkenes. These projects could be said to appear very much in a Barents context, especially the project *Borders*. Hilde also talked about the necessity of creating new formats for art in an area where there is no infrastructure for contemporary art.

The Barents theme was continued by Morten Torgersrud, who presented a photographic research project that focused on reconfigurations of the landscapes of Sápmi and Barents. And he also presented some of his research on the socialist photographer Ellisif Wessel who lived in Kirkenes around 1900.

Hilde and Morten also deliberately set up the presentation of the Barents program, so that it invited a discussion of connections between art and political projects such as Barents. This montage resulted in questions about the aesthetisation of politics, and how art can position itself in relation to powerful agendas such as the Barents Region.

Åsa Sonjasdotter presented her research into the structuring of the potato industry. Her description of how this was streamlined by the Swedish state and how trade and production is presently controlled and made more efficient. She also talked about how she herself had been growing potatoes, and how these were related to her exhibition activities. Particularly interesting here was the fact that the potato is well suited for cultivation in a northern climate. For more on this project see [www.potatoperspective.org](http://www.potatoperspective.org).

In her first presentation, Andrea Phillips described 'the transnational' as a format produced by globalization. She also described what she sees as a tendency within art to imagine itself as placed outside of the transnational since art often represents or criticizes a global situation, adopting what Andrea referred to as an ethical position believed to be positioned outside of the transnational. Suggesting that the 'between' in the title of the workshop represents an acceptance of links between ethnic politics and capital, she then continued to describe some theoretical perspectives on the transnational, which among other things drew up an interesting parallel between Saadiyat Island (in Abu Dhabi) and the Barents Region.

While the first two days were more or less dedicated to Sápmi and Barents, understood as structures and related to culture and art, the aim of the third day was to consider Contemporary Art as a structure in itself. Morten

Torgersrud introduced the day with a short presentation which asked questions about the status of 'the local' within contemporary art.

Andrea Phillips gave a critical reading of Nicolas Bourriaud's exhibition 'Altermodern' which was currently on in London, focusing on how the language/theory developed by Bourriaud is similar to what one might want, but which might not serve to further one's desired aims.

Åsa Sonjasdotter gave a short presentation on the new Art Academy in Tromsø, and described their local and regional focus through a slide presentation of a student course held in Kåfjord. She also presented ideas relating to their development of a transdisciplinary research platform.

A real treat before the summing up was Marysia Lewandowska's recent film, *Museum Futures*, commissioned by Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden. The film envisions a conversation taking place in relation to the centenary of Moderna Museet (in 2058), and it utilizes the benefits of fictive hindsight to examine how the museum has structures and organizes its presentation of art across history. A suitable production of perspectives on art to end the presentations at the workshop. (A transcript of the dialogue in the film can be found on [www.chanceprojects.com](http://www.chanceprojects.com))

The final session sought to bring together some of the issues that had been laid out during the three days, and to connect these to local curatorial or artistic practices. Discussion centered on the relation of contemporary art to governmental and market narratives. Also discussed was the difficulty of developing a critical position within the all-encompassing neo-liberalism, but as well as the dangers of non-productivity that might result from such critical positions. And on the plus-side: the necessary but constructive struggle of positioning that this creates. Further discussion touched upon what formats would be useful, including the possible invention of new intimate formats, and the advantages of having no gallery space at all. Included in this discussion of formats were also the questions about the potential 'academic research' in this context, which might well become a reality within the new art academy in Tromsø. The question about whether applying to get Manifesta held in the area was a 'good idea' also created some discussion—the main and final question being: Why?

*Report by Morten Torgersrud*





# Making It Up: Aesthetic Arrangements in the Barents Region

Andrea Phillips

The Barents Region can be characterized as a geopolitical zone relatively newly configured for the purpose of delivering profit from natural resources (dominantly oil and gas) at a regional and national level through the enacting of forms of transnationalism. Barents is a 'euro-arctic region' that crosses the established national boundaries of Norway, Russia, Finland and Sweden, in order to establish cross-border trade agreements and co-operations that will secure the protection and accumulation of finance from the area's rich mineral deposits for the foreseeable future. Whilst its spatial structures are physical, reliant upon the locatable and measurable fluctuations of natural resources and their formal movement outwards from Barents, they can also be considered conceptual in the way in which their transitive value is structured through political and commercial migrations and reconfigurations, and through a concomitant and strategic reinvention of bordering to maximize profit within any particular period. In this post-Statist situation, a model of geopolitics is enacted in which the specifics of locatable facts (resources, buildings, workers etc.) are imbricated into the conceptual flexibility necessitated by transnational trade and its inventive and profit-accommodating milieu.<sup>1</sup> Here I will argue that such a situation, in which the facts of the land meet the concepts of the market, has a direct corollary with the field of contemporary art production.

Contemporary artistic production involves the invention of objects and images that, by definition, know no borders and may be easily translatable

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<sup>1</sup> By 'post-Statist' I am indicating a complex contemporary situation in which the post-USSR move to neo-liberal capitalism in the 'East' finds a meeting point with what can be understood as the economically strategic shift away from models of Welfare State social support afforded by the development of neo-liberal capitalism in the 'West'.



around the world. This is a fact of their behavioural condition and a concern rendered through their market requirements.<sup>2</sup> Art objects and images, whether newly produced or retroactively brought back into circulation, are constructed with a capacity to be both singular and uniquely meaningful in one location or situation (a studio then on to an exhibition or a collection) and heterodox and flexibly meaningful in multiple and often simultaneous locations (from site to site, in exhibition and collection, live and archived). This is true of all forms of art, whatever scale or material has been used, and is a result of the ongoing development of technologies of distribution. The development of curating (as a form that is based on the aestheticisation of the distribution and exposition of artworks) and the increase in spaces and places for exposition (from the proliferation of biennale and expo models across the globe to the predominance of cultural gentrification) all work as mechanisms to capacitate the ontological flexibility of artworks. Like the Barents, through transnationalisations of trade and objecthood, contemporary art production acts out a dominant (and hegemonic) shift from national to transnational, from singular to heterodox and from uniquely nameable/locatable to flexibly enactive. Both rely on and are importantly inventive within reconceptualisations of market forces. Contemporary art production, therefore, can, on an initial basis, be seen to resemble (or perhaps preempt) the conceptual and physical structures of invention in Barents.

### TRANSNATIONALISM<sup>3</sup>

What is transnationalism? Briefly described, the transnational is the format produced by shifts in economic, political, territorial, cultural and aesthetic power structures from the organisational logic of the national to the cross- or international. It describes the way in which currencies, commodi-

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<sup>2</sup> Here I am referencing Bruno Latour's concept of 'matters of fact' as opposed to 'matters of concern', drawing on his work regarding Actor-Network-Theory. It is interesting to speculate on the relation between Latour's overtly positivised concept of ANT and its implications here, whereby the acknowledged move towards an understanding of objects, humans and affects as equally capacitated in the formatting of any assemblage of sociability is met by the fact that in Barents, as elsewhere, the mobilisation of such an assemblage ushers in the development of regimes of capital. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: OUP, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> This description of transnationalism has been developed with Suhail Malik and has been previewed in a joint paper, 'transnational aesthetics contra the affect of the global', given at the conference *O Fascinio de Ulisses* at Museu Temporario, Lisbon, October 2008.

ties, technologies, affects and meanings move from national distribution to international or transnational distribution through a process of boundary flux. As such, transnationalism is a socio-geographical networking mechanism that facilitates productions of all sorts across borders, between diverse regions and through novel assemblages. People factor in this structure as part of the process of production, and transnationalism is often explicitly evidenced through the shift of peoples from place to place, through migrancies, their difficulties, their limits and their possibilities.

Transnationalism has thus a psycho-economic structure that can be termed aesthetic. Not only does it share in the novel procedures of aesthetic invention that are associated with contemporary art, it is often mimicked at the micro-level in artistic production (if we take contemporary art as symptomatically defined by an insistence on working across borders and without regard to material and disciplinary definitions). Further, both contemporary art and transnationalism instantiate temporary, often precarious, sometimes fictional and mainly task-related communities. Transnationalism is thus at once a productive force and an affect of that force: as such it is involved with continuous translations and transformations of commodities and subjectivities.

## BORDERLESSNESS

Dominant amongst a plethora of contemporary curatorial and artistic concerns is the desire to re-conceptualize borders for reasons that are motivated partially in recognition of art's border-crossing capacity and partially on the grounds of ethics (through which a generalization of artistic and curatorial concerns for openness in the face of political, social and aesthetic closure is articulated—more on this later). Much theoretical, curatorial and artistic work has been done over the last two decades to, firstly, recognize borders as repressive geopolitical formats and, secondly, to imagine worlds without borders, or worlds in which border zones become pliable and expressive areas of thought and action, 'in-between spaces', capacitated by spatial and temporal conditions that enable new modes of existence and new community formations. Here a second parallel with the Barents Region might be made, as both contemporary art and the Barents can be seen to profit from the mechanisms of transnationalism and work as troubling factors in its dispersement (in the Barents, as I will explore, through the identitarian and/or local losses de-bordering can be seen to enact, and in art through a paradoxical exemplification of forms of immaterial labour and subtle exploitation).

If Barents is a novel and replicable model of flexible resource capture and dispersement that increases capital, then it could be considered a curatorial project in the sense that it models a way in which to understand and utilise objects, materials and people across a flexible and precarious time and space zone, unhinged from historic traditions and legislations.

## BARENTS AS CURATORIAL INVENTION

*Few people connect emotionally to Barents, even in Norway and Russia. In other words, there is a great diversity of identities in Barents, but no Barents identity as such. Only a few subgroups, consisting of artists and people somehow on the fringe, especially close to the border, have something that can be called a Barents-identity.<sup>4</sup>*

Despite historical disputes over border territory, not least between the USSR and German-occupied and post-occupation Norway leading up to Glasnost (so, therefore, relatively recently), Barents is a topographical invention that is intended to surmount the orthodoxies of difference held to account by rigid border-thinking in favour of the impetus for capital flow. This overrides any local, regional or even national forms of identity and replaces them with the requirement to build social formats on broader networks enabled by technology and transportation as well as elective affiliation. Such aspects of social formation necessitate the overruling of more traditional forms of collectivity: 'Barents is a political invention, but not a political region. It has no common election, budgets, administration or representation'.<sup>5</sup> Here a complex of cross-border flexibilities operating at a supra-regional level surpasses national delimits but does so in order to retranslate as capital accumulation partially fed back into the region and nation. The border towns and communities of Barents, where they are named as such, exist technically and politically under the technocracies of international treatise—NATO, the EU, Schengen, etc. This offers opportunities to develop 'new communities' but does so in the strategic (and temporal) accommodation of transnational capital production:

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<sup>4</sup> Morten Andreas Strøksnes, 'The Inner Space of Barents' in (eds.) Espen Røyseland and Øystein Rø, *Northern Experiments: The Barents Urban Survey 2009* (Barents: Barents Triennale, 2009), pp. 59-60.

<sup>5</sup> Strøksnes, *ibid.*, p. 58.

*Russians and Norwegians are now working on a new border pass that would apply for locals living within 30km from the border (on both sides). The new regime, when put in place, will create a transnational group of 35,000 border citizens who can freely cross the border, creating flexible solutions for a cross border job market and cross border shopping of culture, goods, education, entertainment and lifestyles... Given an open border and focus on transnational infrastructures, the borderland can develop into a synergistic core area of the Barents region.*<sup>6</sup>

This production of temporary new commonalities exemplifies the rhetoric of contemporary artistic and curatorial endeavours. From *Utopia Station* at the 2003 Venice Biennale through Rirkrit Tiravanija's *The Land* in Thailand (1998-ongoing), Jeremy Deller's *Speak to the Earth and it will tell you* for Munster Skulptor Projekt 2007 to Jeanne van Heeswijk's collaboration *The Blue House* in IJburg (2004-ongoing), Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno's *No Ghost just a Shell* (1998-2009) and Thomas Hirschhorn's *Monument to Spinoza* in the Bijlmer, Amsterdam (2009), the attraction and mobilization of people in a temporary collective production at the behest of an artistic or curatorial concept work as multiple aestheticisations of what in other terms might be more ordinarily understood as the pleasurable and/or needs-based impulse to collectively organise. These examples, often produced as critiques of more stable community infrastructures and often described as heterotopias following Foucault's spatial reconceptualization of spaces of multiple alterity, work to enhance the rhetoric of synergism in play in new globalised formats of social and political organization. A clear example is the Manifesta organization, whose 2008 biennale was distributed across a number of towns in the South Tyrol region of Italy, and whose 2010 edition is located in Murcia, Spain, 'looking towards' North Africa. Manifesta lists its interest in an 'open ended, dialogical process' as a way of responding to the great changes brought to Europe with the end of the Cold War in order to 'involve individual artists and artistic communities from diverse backgrounds all over the continent'. This 'dialogue' is proposed to take place across the continent of Europe and its various cultures to establish a 'network' that recognizes the dual condition of a 'prevailing international artistic and intellectual debate and the specific qualities and idiosyncrasies of a given location' and seeks to provide an 'interface' between them.<sup>7</sup> Here, contemporary art

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<sup>6</sup> 0047, 'Welcome to Borderland' in *Northern Experiments: The Barents Urban Survey 2009*, op.cit., pp. 150-153.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.manifesta.org](http://www.manifesta.org)

and its several discourses and manifestations (experiments, discussions, networks, etc.) are privileged as the way of crossing borders and involving people from 'diverse backgrounds'.

In Barents there has already been talk of bidding for an edition of Manifesta (which, like the Olympic Games or the Football World Cup, is open to any region in a competition based on the merit of a proposed curatorial concept, the region's claim to critical and geo-cultural relevance as well as its ability to fundraise for the event; significantly, a region might bid with its own consortium of arts and cultural institutions but the central Manifesta Foundation will remain in control of the choice of curators, etc., thus striating the location of authorship across multiple platforms). Other Barents events might seem to contribute to a growing mobilization of exemplary locational event-based and temporalised performance. The Barents arts festival, Barents Spektakel, according to the architectural research office 0047, already 'defines this [cross-border] space', making connections between principle towns Nikel in Russia and Kirkenes in Norway 'as a common arena for art and culture, a predicament of what will surely come'.<sup>8</sup>

As Barents begins to mobilize contemporary art and culture to platform its newly transnationalised, world-facing spaces of production and novel (meaning a-national) potential socialization, it ushers in the prospect of artists and curators acting as exemplary characters (cross-border, flexible citizens). But a competing example of such flexible citizenship (if it can be accurately named as such given the historically national imperatives of civility) comes in the form of the Saami. Saami peoples, and Sápmi landscape, is the historical predecessor to concepts such as flexible land zoning and movement driven by exigencies of resource profit. The inventiveness made imperative by capital accumulation and redistribution has occurred and continues to occur across the remote and largely inhospitable landscape by Saami, whose nomadic practices driven by reindeer-grazing and natural calendric timetables offer differently motivated but similarly organised interpretations of landscape zoning. Sápmi is a way of organizing land use and ownership in as flexible manner as possible in order to capitalize on natural resources at their most fruitful or productive period in any given cycle of years. Saami identification with concepts of nationalism and/or regionalism may only be partial, in that the historic root of much Saami practice is marginalized and oppressed, and this partiality lends itself to transnationalism. Largely ignored, under-resourced and/or destroyed through

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<sup>8</sup> 0047, op. cit., p. 150.

centuries of Norwegian (and more generally European) colonisation, the ancient methodologies of flexible border understanding that such processes of survival strain to continue to stand alongside the transnationalism of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region as a weakened, significantly undervalued and misrecognised forerunner to contemporary cross-border thinking.

## SEZ

If it is possible to bring contemporary art, Saami methodologies and the Barents region together in an unholy alliance of competing but structurally similar and potentially hegemonic methodologies, then it is in part through the advantages of rich natural resources that they all must be viewed. Transnationalism folds Saami, art, and Barents re-configurations together in the name of flexibility based on profit, be that fiscal or cultural. But what does the bringing together of these three forms produce? Are there benefits to such a recognition? By way of an answer, it is worth considering another geo-fiscal model built on oil money, that of Saadiyat Island off Abu Dhabi, in the UAE.

The Saadiyat Cultural District, located on an island connected by bridge to the main city of Abu Dhabi, is a construction of major museums, concert halls, performing arts centres etc. as well as 'luxury town homes and apartments' being built by a wholly owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Tourist Authority as part of the \$27 billion construction of Saadiyat Island. The Cultural District's facilities are designed by some of the best known and best branded architect offices in the world (Nouvel, Gehry, Hadid, Ando), much of whose practices and reputations have grown through culture-based commissions across the globe. This cultural model has been masterminded by the former Director of the Guggenheim Foundation, Thomas Krens, working with Sheikh Tahnoon Bin Zayed Al Nayan, the Abu Dhabi Tourist Board Chief and Crown Prince. As what they term 'a starting point for cultural exchange', the buildings of Saadiyat Island 'promise to be more than aesthetic experiments, outlining [instead] a vision of cross-cultural pollination'. The transnational dialogue here is clearly lodged in prospective gains made via the integration of business, tourism and art in an international capital investment programme. The developers of Saadiyat Island are aware of the cynicism that would condemn such efforts as merely commercial ventures. Mubarak Muhairi, the Director General of the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, acknowledges with great precision the exact reason why

art is a key vector for such development: 'this is not just about tourism; it also has global cultural dimensions... We believe the best vehicle for crossing borders is art'.<sup>9</sup>

Saadiyat Island belongs to a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). SEZs are areas that are juridically and economically constituted by governmental agencies at a state or regional level (often in conjunction with business) to increase business development by drawing in external investment. Such zones have a limited autonomy from their parent government (and this relation differs from zone to zone). They have been particularly important in the transition made by centralized economies to liberal and neoliberal markets (Russia, China) as test beds for sustainable forms of economically liberal trade, production and revenue. SEZs are constituted by a complex of private commerce-state forces to capitalize on the globalization of labour and finance to kick start external investment and inflows of the highly educated labour that generates more fixed income streams. The standard strategy for increasing external investment is a loosening of regulatory, tax and duty requirements. But competition between such zones is not just over attracting external investments as such a purely economic argument might suggest. It is also geared towards securing a transnational workforce the key characteristics of which are their high level of education and strong interest in 'quality of life' for the promotion of globalized capital accumulation that the formulation of transnationally organized culture becomes important. That is, as the case of Saadiyat Island makes most explicit, SEZs are reliant upon and present themselves as attractive opportunities for aesthetic enrichment through the deployment of a culture that is importantly constituted through a transnational aesthetics.

Barents is also a SEZ, taking advantage of tax and export legislation as well as special employment circumstances to increase trade and inward investment. In the sense that a SEZ literally maps economics across borders (and that we must now understand mapping as an aesthetico-political activity in itself) it is clear to see that the strategies that SEZs use to procure and utilise power can also be thought of as aesthetic in that their invention is not only directly involved in the creative and opportunistic redescription of borders often on a time and task-specific basis but also in the fact that SEZs are produced as the direct manifestation of contemporary capitalism's grasp of the necessities of artistic modes of production: precarious, foundationless, open to change, etc. To illustrate this

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.saadiyat.ae](http://www.saadiyat.ae)

it is worth considering the fact that as part of the Saadiyat development both the Louvre (with a building by Jean Nouvel) and the Guggenheim (with a building by Frank Gehry) have sold their brands to the concept for a delimited period of around 25 years, after which the brands will be retired from the island or renegotiated. In this context, in Barents, how do concepts such as ethnicity operate as mobilisers of transnational aesthetics? Barents is qualitatively different as a SEZ from, say, Saadiyat. But do concepts like Saami, when read outside the brackets of ethnography tied to location, or eulogies of nomadism, become interesting conceptual and political parallels to the same networked and creative financialisation in evidence at least rhetorically in Barents, moving laterally and pragmatically, taking advantage of network economics, etc. (and, of course, suffering the blows of its immateriality)? How far away is a horizon upon which Saami might be mobilized in the name of cultural creation in Barents in the same way as Emirati culture has been in the formation of Saadiyat specifically and the UAE more generally? Here, the shapeshifting potential of transnational assemblages of tax law, natural resource corralling, cross-border invention, artistic instrumentalisation, co-operative or exploited indigenisation and political will are seen to work across a wide paradigm of production. But, if Saadiyat is trumpeted (at least currently) as an extraordinary and audacious endeavour in the face of globalised financial retrenchment, the Barents is described by its critics in oppositional terms:

As a geopolitical frontier, Barents is about natural resources, about becoming the new 'Middle East', the main trade route between Asia, Europe and America (if the North-East and the North-West passages become navigable), and so forth. It's about global control over highly important spaces of capital. The instrumental logic is dominating other and softer human aspects of the people living within the region. There's an emerging post-colonial discourse regarding Barents and the Arctic. Sometimes the region is talked of as some no-man's land up for grabs... very powerful interests from all over the world are ready to turn the region into construction sites, oilrigs, gas fields and more... Wealth is being created by knowledge, creativity, information, tourism and other 'soft' means. Barents? Mine it, drill it, fish it—just take it all and leave...

Barents needs stronger border dynamics and softer areas for exchange. Stuff to make the flow flow, if there's a flow at all.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Strøksnes, *op. cit.*, p.60.



## INEQUALITY AT THE BORDER

It is also abundantly clear that transnationalism—thus by extension its aesthetic and affective organization—produces inequalities on a global scale. Many writers, including David Harvey and Nancy Fraser, have produced important work that analyses this procedure, in which the imperatives of mobilization and translatability that mask the unevenness of capital distribution, the increasingly pervasive regulatory force of communication technology and the destitution wrought through rights-less, non-unionised and literally groundless labour forces at conflicting social and political scales is rendered powerless in the face of transnational reinventions of those traditional mechanisms of defense: self-authorship, social definition, and control over (economic) space.<sup>11</sup>

Art usually places itself on the side of this critique of transnationalism, using images, objects, and processes that either demonstrate or assume as read an ethical position that opposes the economic formatting of the transnational, making images that testify, directly and indirectly, to the forms of inequality that transnational capital produces. Artwork and curatorial projects are increasingly produced to illustrate, conceptualize or inhabit border points in a strategy or re- or anti-performance, whereby the enactment of crisis or slippage at a recognized or surpassed border stands (in) for a critique of the effects of global capital in relation to those that live and work, either physically or psychologically, at borders. This is particularly apparent when artists make work about ethnic or indigenous disputes over land and rights.

However, the same works gain reputational and fiscal profit from their circulation within and through the transnational forms of art (the biennale, the touring exhibition, the art fair, the online journal or floating pedagogical/discursive structure, etc., as well as the 'gun for hire' artist and/or curator, flying from zone to zone to distribute works and ideas, often works and ideas premised on the exposition, direct or indirect, of inequality). Much contemporary work, and many curatorial formats produce cultural capital from their itinerant and paradoxical attention to localised images and objects within a transnational aesthetic domain (here it might be said that contemporary art returns us to the basis of long-standing critiques

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<sup>11</sup> See David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006) and Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).

of ethnography). Like transnationalism, contemporary art seeks to surpass borders—to deliberate with forms of mobilization and migration—for economic and cultural profit (the art market is precisely inventive of novel distributions of capital on a global basis), whilst at the same time retaining access to localized disputes over the arrangement of images (media) and objects (commodities). As Saskia Sassen describes it, the format of the transnational is exactly shaped in order to distribute territory, authority and rights in order to profit multinational corporations and mechanisms not by misrecognising local, regional and national states but instead by using them for their capabilities of production within their allotted milieu.<sup>12</sup> Sassen insists on the imbricated—folded, woven and essentially heterogeneous—nature of socio-spatial meaning as a part of transnationalism. This is an aesthetic procedure that is at once recognizable at the level of international commerce and at the same level of artistic production. It allows artists (and economies) to surpass debates about specific and/or local identities and borders by recognizing rather than eroding their power but mobilizing it for organisational effect. Transnational economics seeks access to borders and territories for reasons of fiscal control, contemporary art for reasons of conceptual control. Both thus rely on new forms of invention between capital (economic, cultural) and image production. These new types of making employ by necessity aspects of aesthetic organization that cross between the economic world and the art world. A SEZ is an exact rendition of such making.

Artists, their curators and their dealers, may protest at this rendering of synergy between artistic and economic production. Many artists and curators would insist on the fact that there are crucial differences between artistic and economic making—that one does not seek profit in the same way as the other, and one pays critical attention to its own production mechanisms whereas the other does not. But it is clear even at a superficial level that the homogenizing force of global economics is also evident in the art milieu, specifically with regard to the speed of globalization evidenced through formats of display (biennales and art fairs increasingly dominant as forms and increasingly coinciding), distributions of status ('A-List' artists appearing all over the world simultaneously), influential ideas (conferences and events on 'migration', 'performativity', 'sensation' etc., occurring in arts and education centres on a concentric basis). Like a SEZ, the art world is built

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<sup>12</sup> See Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: PUP, 2006).

to profit ideologically on profiteering from local and specific forces. Both use a similar set of capabilities that cross materials, techniques and spaces.

Such concepts of transnationalism are clearly worrying for all types of political activity based on forms of solidarity and community and pose a fundamental question to the forms of resistance politics that might be produced. They are also worrying for those who would seek to defend a specific set of skills as authentically artistic: when concepts of aesthetic making are seen to migrate across disciplines, processes of distinction melt away.

## MAKING THE BARENTS

*[I]t seems as if the time of consensus, with its shrinking public space and effacing of political inventiveness, has given to artists and their mini-demonstrations, their collections of objects and traces, their dispositifs of interaction, their in situ or other provocations, a substitutive political function. Knowing whether these 'substitutions' can reshape political spaces or whether they must be content with parodying them is without doubt an important question of our present.<sup>13</sup>*

What types of making, then, are evident in Barents, and what role should artists and curators play in its development, given the fact that contemporary art can no longer be a privileged site of specific or special activity other than through its unique formats of exhibition? Is it through this zoning difference that art might work to critical effect within and parallel to the Barents (or any other) SEZ region? Do curatorial re-organisations of artistic activity across the Barents (or any other) region have the capacity to reframe the possible outcomes of the region? Is there a way in which curatorial and artistic making can be said to coincide with the forms of transnational cross-governmental making in ways that have social and political influence? And conversely, if the Barents region can be recognized as a curatorial project, how might its curators recognize the artful nature of their invention?

Barents is interesting because it is a re-versioning of previously guarded borders across a lateral plane and so involves the complex redescription or reallocation of competitively embedded historical cultures (Saami, Finnish, Norwegian, Russian etc.). It is also interesting in that it increasingly calls

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<sup>13</sup>Jacques Ranciere, *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), p. 60.

upon cultural invention to support its procedures. This request to cultural making is understood to work at the level of civic and/or lifestyle enhancement and regeneration. But it could be understood at another level—at the level of political making. As I have described, Special Economic Zones make especially clear how a certain formation of culture is a key promotional activity to draw wealth and commercial activities organized around networks of services and finances as much as trade. Artworks made for the conditions of the SEZ—that is, both related to State and existing outside or alongside its formation—develop in complex and assemblaged forms that mimic and reproduce such political structures at an ontological level. So the call for artistic participation is one with political opportunity but it comes at the price of participating in procedures of consensus and conciliation that have so far provided for a strictly oligarchical form of making.

If the procedures of transnationalisation appear to be turning towards the artistic and curatorial with greater insistence on the economic possibility of creative experience, then we must be careful with the political form of this burgeoning friendship. The structural and aesthetic affinity between contemporary artistic practice and transnational procedures of making is based on shared concepts of networks of accumulation and distribution. As such, artistic and curatorial opposition to the economic and social procedures of transnationalism at the level of ethics appear to be shallow. Rather, we must take our participation seriously in the political forms that enable and finance artistic production. Art made and arranged as an ethical demand produces only affect and does so from a privileged site. Current artistic practice produces an anomalous set of formats through which such ethical demands are made—temporary autonomous zones, creative enclaves, radical academies, non-places, localities of free cultural trade, pop-up swap shops, heterotopias. These types of making are limited by their own productive system: they are displayed, transferred from site to site, vernissaged and finissaged, documented and published. If, instead of such limitations, the example of Barents is opportunistically maximised, such curatorial projects can be seen to operate on a novel geo-political scale upon which claims for autonomy and demands for freedom should be taken seriously on a different temporal basis. Here it is possible to recognize the seriousness through which new formats can be invented.

Invention necessitates making and vice-versa. Barents, like contemporary art, is an aesthetic concept partially based on territorial fact and partially in new forms of politically unpredictable image-capital. As such, it is possible to say that contemporary art and contemporary landscape

come together in new ways, but ways in which their orthodox modernist distinctions, tied to traditional forms of cultural and economic capital, disintegrate at the level of ontology. The Barents is a made-up enclave—a fictionalisation or theatricalisation of a territory for economic gain. This process of making involves presentation and representation (exhibition, display). It involves making previously disputed borders disappear (illusionism). Barents is flexible and partial, and will be reinvented as its natural resources shift, change, and eventually disappear. Within such a format, contemporary art is an ideal collaborator—as inventive and unpredictable in its image making as a SEZ. What can artists and curators do with such a recognition? The politics of this question presuppose the necessity for taking responsibility for the precarity artists, curators and their theorists have so far simply fetishised.

*With thanks to Morten Torgersrud and Hilde Methi whose conversations have helped shape this text.*





# CYCLONE KINGKRAB & PIPER SIGMA

Magali Daniaux and Cédric Pigot invited you — [Share](#) — **Public event**



**Remove from my events** — [Export](#) — **Report Event**



**THE MUTATION-INDUCING AGENTS invited you**

## SUNSHINE METAL TARGET

**Type of event:** Reinforcement of the scientific and military presence

**Time of beginning:** Unspecified

**Time of end:** Unspecified

**Location:** Along the 141st Meridian

**More info:** Signals, signals, signals... 24h/24

**Website:** <http://www.withoutanicebreaker.com>

**Video:** 'Chocolate, Vanilla, Strawberry'

MetOp-A satellite observes the hole in the stratospheric ozone layer, non stop. Thanks to its activity, THOR 6 discovers the magic of the world. Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer (TOMS), Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI), Ozone Monitoring Spectrometers record any variations that may occur.

Silently, NGCC Amundsen 4 glides through a long stretch of free water, between the Arctic Isles. Temperature oscillates between  $-19^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Near the launching site, a coast-guard armed with a rifle shoots a Polar bear. Air-traffic controllers and pilots fly low over fluorescent pipelines and floating units. They spot a few small reddish-brown clusters of nuclear debris drifting. The 2131 wrecks of Russian submarines, covered with swarms of little auks, still taunt them under the sun. In the whiteness of midnight, Kursk receives a decoded message on his I-phone: 'the floating craft near the bearing structure is particularly hostile; your help is most welcome!'

**Advertisement:** let's live in the dark.

**Confirmed guests:**

This event has 3 million confirmed guests

Conservative Party: 50 %

Progress Party: 50 %

Break everything!

**MARITIME HUB invited you**

## 300000 OIL TANKERS LEAVE THE RUSSIAN-NORWEGIAN EXTREME NORTH FOR DELIVERY IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

**Type of event:** Lucrative naval activity

**Time of beginning:** Today

**Time of end:** In a week

**Location:** In the new Arctic maritime transportation corridors

**Description:** Personal shopper

**Website:** <http://www.travelwithoutavisa.net>

**Video:** 'Huge traffic jam in the Arctic Ocean'

Jack has just finished his round and heads towards the 5m2 shoebox which he uses as a cabin. He sits on the Storq memory-form mattress and considers changing his life. But, no doubt, conditions of tanker crews have improved since Arctic maritime corridors have been opened. No more pirates, shorter journeys, better wages, single cabins... No, what he can no longer bear is the movies, the games, the music, the shows, the trips, the Kirkenes Stores and Kirkenes XD special offers. To change his job and move... He swallows his daily ration of tranquilizers and antidepressants: 2 Lysanxya and 3 Prozac tablets and there you go: just say bye to your brain!

Platforms appear all over the place like the genitals of a Hindu Extremist:  
a new silent machine, unic

You can test the three main wave energy methods

**Advertisement:** you have no idea what Kirkenes can do for you.

**Confirmed guests:**

This event has 1 321 851 888 confirmed guests

1 321 851 888 Chinese

Satellite everything!





**MERRILL LYNCH & WEATHER WILDER invited you**

## PARADISE MIRROR: PRICE OF THE BARREL

**Type of event:** Transactions over pools of opaque cash flows

No beginning

No end

**Location:** On Turquoise the first European Darkpool

**Description:** Come and exchange stacks of money in complete tranquility

**Website:** <http://www.tohellwithfinancialmarketregulation.biz>

**Video:** 'Live recovery and treatment of the signal/crossing network'

In electronic correspondence in Asia this morning, the price of crude oil was up by 9 degrees. In London, on the InterContinentalExchange, the barrel of North Sea Brent went up by 54 cents to USD 87.44, at an identical deadline. On the other hand, BP attempts to seal the well of Platform Deepwater Horizon, which now lies 1500 metres deep, while salt relentlessly attacks the iron of platforms worldwide.

If you have 90 billion barrels of oil down your sleeve, just quickly pulverize the new residents wearing neo-yé-yé glasses and lime-coloured bandanas stuck on oil puddles, into clouds of full silhouettes. Unique styles no longer belong to the post-2030s alone. Parts of the chemical subsoil resemble an old Sex-Pistol track, switched by a disintegrated DJ; 30% of the probable gas reserves of the planet are snatched in heretic salvos, scoffed by your old Total Zippo. And in all Statoil petrol stations, one can find X-rated hotdogs at only 6 NOKs, hot coffee and outrageous flower beds.

Drive on your wind-turbine swollen motorway, Gringo!

Every night arctic media are why-be-blue natural reserve

### **Information on the event:**

This is a public event. Anyone may attend this event

RSVP, or invite other friends to this event

### **Confirmed guests:**

This event has 18 confirmed guests

Saudi Arabia- Russia- The United States—Iran- China—Canada—The United Arab Emirates—Venezuela—Norway—Kuwait—Nigeria—Brazil—Algeria—Iraq—Libya—Angola—The United Kingdom

Covet everything!

**THE FAR-NORTH GAMES** invited you

## ARCTIC OIL SLICK AND ITS UNPRECEDENTED CHARACTER

**Type of event:** Cleaning the far end of the world

**Time of beginning:** This very day

**Time of end:** On a cold day in Hell

**Location:** In the heart of a new strategy

**Description:** Implosion of the power-holding coalition in Oslo

**Website:** <http://www.blackbrowngreydeadbodies.net>

**Video:** 'The Oil Slick in the Arctic is Disastrous'

'Impact of the dispersing agents on the ecosystem'

The leak soils the coastline. The burning STATOIL robots installed a dome between the layers of sick phytoplankton caking the blocked tubes with difficulty on Thursday: 'a metal dome disfigured by dense vertical pressure' according to the latest updates of the number-one synthetic cadastral authorities 'wandering at a low price'. Crude and gas are released during operation CHONG in the section of the thin damaged ascending column in the well. Whales wail. Important Arctic disaster, it's the wild and invasive cry of the last Kingkrabs, now turned blue, on the plates in Fish Hotel. Bears, penguins, fish are at half-mast. Pixellized black forms streamlets down the sides of the last icebergs, stick-on prototelegrams rain on shop-windows, the puddles of eternity displayed by large stores: No Way. Under a sheet of Plexiglas, destructive beams disintegrate journalists held in quarantine and vomiting radioactive eyes. The last fjords are being sold and distributed for a few NOK crumbs to ghost companies on e-bay. At the ends of rainbows, muffled up in their lustred silver tinsel padded jackets, prisoners—the 'thick-fingers' manoeuvre over sticky mountains and the last bulldozers melt into mush, solitary, orange with awe. Beyond the sky-crowns, the auto-video and auto-photo systems, delicate underwater melodies signal the last explosives and pumping operations.

Follow price-trends of the barrel of petrol daily!  
The oil slick has already cost you usd 450 billion!

**Confirmed guests:**

This event has 250 000 confirmed guests  
250 000 seagulls

Micro-gravitate everything!

THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP OF EXPERTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND JONAS GAHR STØRE invited you

## CRASHED PLANE IN THE SNOW

**Type of event:** Division of the Arctic

**Time of end:** You'll be dead by then

**Location:** Near the new deposit.

**Description:** Take-off towards unknown territories...

**Website:** <http://www.18.43millioneurosaday.com>

**Video:** 'The human flood muffles sounds'

Come and listen to ASPO and let the endless migration of its heroes carry you away in 'the production predictions are overvalued for financial-regulation and political reasons'.

So let Matthew Simmons give you the fiery keys of his Spectacular Doomsday Fantasy.

With this former member of the Statoil Supervisory Board, discover a world concealed under the fabric of reality and head towards the forbidden territories.

Plunge in the world of darkness and secret services with Raw Light Mellow Oil.

This report essentially highlights future possible climate-change, natural-disaster, migration and developmental scenarios, in the hope of arousing increased public awareness and finding answers to the challenges looming on the horizon. Kirkenes declaration: 'What we call global warming is a game of fools, playing in the void.'

Erosion: flood, disturbance

Brutal depressurizations. Ultimate simulations. 'I drown almost every night'.

'Sometimes, I collapse in a corner in the house and weep for hours.'

As early as Chapter 2, it became clear that the rulers were bastards and that it would be impossible to refrain from a wank, led by such an expert hand, with a fat and vaguely nauseating environmentalist position. I allowed it to happen... Working together for all these decades in the Arctic is the best guarantee for peace, but bear in mind that I am absolutely similar to you: as regular as a clock and sometimes my body even sends out S.O.S messages.

Share with more friends

**Confirmed guests:**

This event has zero confirmed guests

Dump everything!

[Like](#) — [Comment](#) — [See more](#)







# Nenets Autonomous Okrug

Fieldtrip  
June 15–30, 2008

Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Russia, is a core area of engagement for the Nenets indigenous peoples and oil industries. Nenets and Izhma-Komi in this region have for many centuries maintained a traditional way of life rooted firmly in reindeer husbandry. Modern industrial and social development under Arctic conditions causes severe changes, both to the environment and on the socio-economic situation of the indigenous peoples who both live on and obtain subsistence from the land. How is the relationship between the oil industries and traditional economy being negotiated?

Participants: Dr Aileen Espiritu (historian, Canada/Norway), Geir Tore Holm (artist, Norway), Krishna Kireev (1975–2009) (artist, Russia), Kristin Tårnesvik (artist, Norway). Co-ordinator: Hilde Methi (curator, Norway). In cooperation with Yasavey (the Assosiation of the Nenets People) and The Barents Institute.





*Geir Tore Holm, From Field work (Nenets Autonomous Okrug),  
c-prints, 2008*

# Program for Fieldtrip to Nenets Autonomous Okrug

- Day 1 13:00 Arrival Methi and Kireev.  
(Sunday 15th June) 19:50 Arrival Holm and Tårnesvik.  
Accommodation at Pechora Hotel, Naryan-Mar.
- Day 2 Meet with Andrey Vakuev at The Norwegian Barents Secretariat Office  
(Monday 16th June) in Naryan-Mar. Visit the Nenets Local Lore Museum has big collection  
of works of local painters and painters from other places working with  
Nenets and Northern themes. Meet with Elena Menshakova, Director  
of the museum. Visit Municipal Exhibition Hall and Town Exposition  
Centre, working with painters, photographers and craftsmen, and meet  
the Nenets painter, Nadezhda Viucheiskaya.
- 19:50 Arrival Espiritu.  
Evening talk. Aileen comments on the policy regarding indigenous  
peoples in the former Soviet Union and Russia.
- Day 3 Early. Go by boat to Nel'min Nos (ca 4 hours), a Nenets village ca 40  
(Tuesday 17th June) km North of Naryan-Mar, by the river Nelma. The village has ca 1,000  
inhabitants. Meet with Mikhail Taleev, head of the Administration  
of Nel'min Nos and member of Yasavey Association, musicians  
(Maimbava), The Ethnic Culture Centre. Accommodation in the  
Administration building. Cook outside on a bonfire. Problems with  
water supplies. Sleeping bag needed.
- Day 4 Return to Naryan-Mar.  
(Wednesday 18th June)
- Day 5 Visit Naryan-Mar Administration and see the city.  
(Thursday 19th June) Meeting with Valentina Zganich, head of the Nenets Department at the  
Ethno-Cultural Centre, board representatives and administrators of the  
Yasavey Association.
- Day 6 Meet with journalist Andrey Solopov, TV-company (branch of the  
(Friday 20th June) Pomorie STRC, Arkhangelsk).  
Visit Angelina Ardeeva, Nenets ethnographer, and Filipp Ardeev, a well  
know Nenets master in making of shaman tambourines.
- Day 7 Reception at Yazavey's meeting-room. Presentations.  
(Saturday 21st June)
- Day 8 16:20 Departure Holm, Kireev and Espiritu.  
(Sunday 22nd June)
- Day 10 09:10 Departure Tårnesvik, Methi.  
(Tuesday 24th June)
- Maybe: Krasnoe is base settlement for two large prosperous reindeer  
farms—Erv and Harp. Takes 2 hours by car. Right now the bridge on the  
way to Krasnoe is disassembled because of water flood.

The program will be changed.



*Photographs by Hilde Methi and Kristin Tårnesvik*







*Hotel Polar Capital*







# The Road to Mental Decolonization

Exhibition and seminar  
October 24–November 23, 2008

— *Is Sápmi colonized? Are the Greenlanders decolonized? Are the memories of the indigenous peoples part of Nordic history? Do they embrace the accounts of women? What role can art play in elucidating these memories and healing wounds?*

THE ROAD TO MENTAL DECOLONIZATION questioned through an exhibition and a complementary seminar whether colonialism in the Nordic region is over. Political and economical autonomy is not enough, it seems; also a mental decolonization is required for people to free themselves from a colonial past that seems to keep haunting them like ghosts from the grave in the present. Suffering doubly under colonial patterns of domination, indigenous women of the Nordic region were at the center of the documented artistic and oral inquiries into what effects colonialism and colonial style domination have on women and the degree to which official records of history account for them.

By juxtaposing key work by Greenlandic-Danish artist Pia Arke (1958–2007) and Sámi artist Katarina Pirak Sikku (b. 1965), the exhibition, *The Drive to Remember*, examined whether art can bypass the dominant politics of memory and provide a space to recollect, articulate, mourn, and share undigested mental trauma caused by colonial processes and dynamics. Questions about what these traumas consist of, how they operate, and in what ways they block both geopolitical and mental processes of decolonization were taken up in the seminar, *Healing Postcolonial Traumas of Nordic Indigenous Women*—in a lecture by theorist Kobena Mercer (GH/UK), in testimonies by artist Aslaug Juliussen (Sápmi/NO), social anthropologist Britt Kramvig (Sápmi/NO), social anthropologist Aviâja Egede

Lynge (GL), and artist Iben Mondrup (GL/DK), and in the film *Firekeepers* (2007), introduced by dir. Rossella Ragazzi (I/NO), who also directed the documentation DVD of this project.

*The Road to Mental Decolonization* was curated by Kuratorisk Aktion (DK) and unfolded in the Tromsø Gallery of Contemporary Art, Norway.

Kuratorisk Aktion (KA) is an independent curators' collective, formed in 2005 by Danish independent curators Frederikke Hansen and Tone Olaf Nielsen. Collaborating with artists, theorists, and activists from all over the world, KA produces cross-disciplinary exhibitions, publications, and discussions that investigate the complex relations between historical colonialism, capitalist globalization, and neo-colonial forms of exploitation on the one hand and postcolonial forms of conviviality on the other.

Distribution of the Documentation DVD (63:45 min.):  
[info@kuratorisk-aktion.org](mailto:info@kuratorisk-aktion.org) and [samiskkunst@gmail.com](mailto:samiskkunst@gmail.com).



An excerpt from the documentation DVD of *The Road to Mental Decolonization*:

## What is the landscape where I come from?

Britt Kramvig

Sápmi is a large and diverse landscape, with much variation in terms of where boundaries lie between perpetrator and victim, colonizer and colonized. Boundaries not always easy to make sense of, not least for us ‘grey Sámi,’ who carry both voices in our bodies and memories, and where the decolonization processes involve engaging with these different voices, at the same time as one strips them of the power structures they belong to.

This can be fruitful for setting terms for a reconquest of subjectivity and autonomy as a woman—and also as a man. It involves, in addition, a reconquest of the connections and landscapes, in which this self belongs. Today, we’re witnesses both to ongoing revisions of Northern histories and we witness ongoing collective and personal searchings for ways to make sense of the complexity in which we live. So much has been silenced through centuries of colonial history in Sápmi. The reconquest of autonomy is political work, while decolonization is personal and emotional exposures, where we bring forth the voices we carry within to better see what they are and contain. Bringing the different voices to light thereby also involves putting our loyalty at stake with respect to the paths we may choose in the future. This involves, first and foremost, a coming to terms with silence; a silence full of loneliness, shame, loss, and painful stories.

My mother and her sisters worked hard to live up to the 1950s national ideal of womanhood. They were housewives, who did housework and child rearing, in a sort of Swan Song to realize a world that was not theirs—that was not anchored in the values and knowledge traditions they grew up in. It was only when they traveled home to the farm on Dyrøya that they felt competent, or when they went to the cabin or mountains in the cloudberry marsh or berry forest. What these women—and many others of their generation—shared, as I see it, was a feeling of loss, which brought them to a world of unrest, loss of self-respect, and repeated efforts to locate that, which could help ease the pain. A pain that grew out of a feeling of being

inadequate, of using other's standards to measure one's own life, and of not knowing who you are. In addition, they lacked access to social connections through which they would be able to find out who they were, and thereby stabilize their inner emotional selves with the outside world, the collective, and the social. What's crucial here is that people need to sense that their lives are connected to the lives of others. And that in this larger existential reality, their actions and words will make a difference.

Life is a road—and when we follow that road, we walk the trails of those, who went before us. And we leave behind us traces that become our own individual stories. We daily confront new situations, and we have a need to withdraw to a place where we can rest; where we can recover and narrate the experiences that we've been through and have been exposed to. Both stories and movements work at the unconscious level through bodily rhythms, where one moves from a place of recognition and visibility into a place of uncertainty and unfamiliarity, to then return and settle accounts. What happens then, when we no longer have such a place we can return to? Where our lives can be recovered in stories we share, which then become our shared experiences?

These are questions that Hannah Arendt and Michael Jackson, among others, have addressed. What happens then, when our lives are torn apart from each other? I believe that when these connections disappear, the space of ambiguity we inhabit, becomes a space filled with danger. This space of ambiguity is a dangerous space to be in, for a woman as well as for a man. She is very exposed and very vulnerable, and carries a body that is open and susceptible to assault and violence. And she doesn't have the social security that would provide her and her body the protection she needs.

It has taken time for me to make sense of my own connections. I've had much help along the way.

I've met and written about Sámi women and men, who have been pathfinders and healers, and I've met and written about Sámi women, who have opened their painful colonial stories sufficiently so they could be written about. I've worked on film projects that have given me the chance to examine and contribute to what could be viewed as processes of healing. These have not been conscious choices, as we normally understand 'choice' in Western epistemology. Neither is it by chance that I met the people, who have helped me along the way. What has evolved is the result of a strength I've discovered within myself, which created in-between spaces for us to interact, that again made it possible for me to understand and describe a bit further the living conditions of northern women and men.

While this process has increased my self-awareness, it has also created cracks in my self-understanding and sense of relationship to this landscape. In addition, feminist postcolonial theorists, such as Spivak and others, showed the way and have given a language to the complexity by pointing out that the postcolonial situation will always be characterized by undeniable contradictions, where the only solution is to acknowledge their existence, as Spivak points out. Thereby, it becomes possible to break with the tendency of the census taker, the academic, and the politician to simplify and reinstate categories of purity. This is what we need here in the North. We need perspectives and stories that respect the complexity and diversity we find here. And we need to create new metaphors and new stories, says Spivak. We must create them so that women and men can see that there exists communities one can become part of and where one can find recognition. When I write about the ‘pain points’ in the processes of decolonization—an issue I expect to continue to work on in the future—my intention is to recognize them and open them to multiple contexts, to open them up as a space of possibility for others. I believe that this is one of the possibilities we have in the North.

So many of our small communities bleed from loss of resource bases, workplaces, schools, and young people—and they struggle for daily survival. Communities, where one senses that communal experiences crumble, and where the struggle to defend the kernels that remain means that one has to retreat inwards; retreat to protect what remains of one’s autonomy without being able to define quite what it is. Or that people open their communities to investments and development plans that neither resonate within nor show consideration for the logics resting there as local unspoken languages. And which thereby produces development not robust enough to lead to longterm economic or cultural growth. In terms of identity, it means holding on to the emptiness and not resort to an ‘either/or’ strategy, as Lene Hansen described it with so much insight in her thesis on the cultural revitalization in Riddu Ridđu, Kåfjord. Her account describes how the new generation lifted Sámi identity into the public sphere, and through the demand for a ‘both-and’ identity, i.e. the right to be both Sámi and Norwegian, coaxed those who were silenced—those who were ‘either-or’—out of their emptiness.

I’ve learned, I think, after so many meetings with my own place of origin and with other places that we can’t stop the reproduction of the cultural pain points, the pain that lies in the management of powerlessness and silence, expressed in abuse of power and violence, before we come to



terms with it. Before we expose the troll to the light, we won't get it to crack. We can see this in some of the Sámi communities that have come far in a collective healing process. Places like Tana and Kåfjord that went through conflicted and painful processes in the 1990s, where there was 'No to Sámi Land' and school strikes in response to the new Sámi curriculum and the shooting of Sámi road signs. But where people took on the collective challenge and came to terms with themselves. It means that today these are places with strong vitality, assertiveness, and many interesting cultural expressions; places people move back to and where others are getting started, places that resourceful people are attracted to. What these places have in common, as I see it, is that they have recognized their multiculturally complex past and present. But at the same time, they insist on grounding themselves in Sámi identity as a common reference out of which diversities are built. This is a path to follow and something we should all be inspired not the least by all the communities in Troms and Nordland, where people have started the process. And where people need to look inwards and see their own community in a new way as a place where one can heal one's wounds by recollecting those memories and stories that have been silenced and force them to the surface, so that they become visible—not the least for one's own sake.

This, I think, will enable us—and this is something I'm examining within myself—to make better decisions, so that we're in dialogue both with the situation of the Arctic landscape and our own bodies and intuition. And we should be more open to the spirituality that went underground during colonization, and about which Bente Persen has written. A spirituality that was not left to die, but also hid in the cracks of the communities, where experiences of the spiritual can still be addressed with respect.

Decolonization cannot be a process that we fulfill alone. But we have to initiate it alone. But we can only go through it if we are able to include others. So it is a social process in this respect. Film is the site of sociality per se. Just as filming is a site of sociality—it's a site where you'll never be alone, because there are images and others in the images.





# Snåsa Language Symposium

April 15–16, 2010

SNÅSA LANGUAGE SYMPOSIUM examines the meaning of language through art, theory and experience. Our point of departure is the South Sámi situation and minority languages- shedding light on different aspects of language, such as communication, voice and sound, and language as a force for inclusion and/or exclusion in society.

The symposium opened with the exhibition, *The Last Silent Movie*, by Susan Hiller, in Saemien Sijte. The next day's seminar opened with the linguist Ole Henrik Magga talking about legislation and emotions in relation to the Sámi language. Artist Solvej Dufour Andersen presented her video work, *Mother Tongue at the Arctic Seashore*, art historian Elina Heikka presented the artist group Elonkorjaajat in the context of 1970's international conceptual art, art historian and artist Maja Dunfjeld talked about the interrelation between duedtie (Southsami handicraft) and the Southsami language, artist Kristin Tårnesvik presented her artistic explorations of communication in situations where a common language is missing, linguist Mikael Vinka lectured about *Universal Grammar, Grammatical Variation and Southsami*, artist Geir Tore Holm performed *Mellom hjertespråk og gullspråk* ('*Between Heart Language and Gold Language*'), and four video works by the artist Katarina Zdjelar were screened that investigate various mechanisms in connection to pronunciation, sound and learning of languages.

The symposium was organized in collaboration with Gielem Nastedh, Saemien Sijte and Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art.

*The Last Silent Movie*, Susan Hiller, audio work, 20', 2007



*The Last Silent Movie*, by Susan Hiller, opens the unvisited, silent archives of extinct and endangered languages to create a composition of voices that are not silent. They are not silent because someone is listening. The work sets free some of the ghosts and spectres haunting the unacknowledged *unheimlich* of sound recording, which allows us to hear the words and voices of people mostly now dead. In *The Last Silent Movie*, some of them sing, some tell stories, some recite vocabulary lists and some of them, directly or indirectly, accuse us, the listeners, of injustice. *The Last Silent Movie* is an audio work translated and subtitled on black screens.

The common denominator in Susan Hiller's works is their starting point in a cultural artifact from our society. Her work is an excavation of the overlooked, ignored, or rejected aspects of our shared cultural production. Her art have long been recognized for its visualization of everyday phenomena that lie within the recesses, byways and blind spots of our cultural surround.

BLACKFOOT  
(extinctly endangered)

I can speak my language.

I am a fluent speaker.

Can you speak your language?

Shoum, *Katarina Zdjelar, video, 7', 2009*

A middle age person from Belgrade is in the process of decoding the lyrics of the 1980s hit song 'Shout' by the British pop band Tears for Fears. He does not speak English, so he transfers what he hears into his own 'vocabulary', based on his capacity to vocally interpret and reproduce what is heard. In order to grasp and memorize the lyrics, he writes down what he comprehends as English language. Errors and deformations of the lyrics create an amusing 'new language'. The work is about 'translating one's experience of listening into uttering', to use the artists' own words. A learning without understanding

Katarina Zdjelar's works explore notions of identity, authority and community, and revolve around individuals who challenged by simultaneous inhabitation of different languages, perform themselves through practicing, remembering or reinventing themselves. In her audiovisual works the focus is on language and voice as tools for approaching various subjects, with a particular interest in states of transition, translation, and migratory or nomadic being.





**Mother Tongue at the Arctic Seashore,**  
*Solvej Dufour Andersen, film, 30', 2007*

*Mother Tongue at the Arctic Seashore* treats the conditions of mother tongue during the nationalization politics in North of Norway. In the course of three generations, the Northeastern part of Norway, being a well functioning heterogeneous society consisting of several cultures and languages as Sámi, Finnish, Russian and Norwegian, develops into a homogeneous Norwegian society. Can one lose one's mother tongue? The film is based on interviews with Olav Beddari, Tove Bull, Einar Niemi and Venke Törmänen.

In Solvej Dufour Andersen's work 'absence' has been an ongoing subject of exploration. In her video pieces she is interested in the portrait art and the personal narrations by her protagonists, the interaction and the abilities of the storyteller to tell and the artist to retell.





# Kongens tale / The King's Speech

Kristin Tårnesvik

The speech given by Norwegian King Olav V at the inauguration of the Sámi Parliament translated into Morse code.



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# The Sámi Art Festival as a Temporary Position

Thomas Kintel

The Sámi Art Festival (SKF) is a series of events, such as exhibitions, seminars, publishing of literature, workshops and study trips to different places in the Barents region and/or Sápmi, during the course of the three years, from 2008 to 2011. Thematically, The Sámi Art Festival is concerned with a number of emotionally charged concepts, like autonomy, trauma, marketing, neoliberalism, ethnicity, gender, indigenous people, rights, post-colonialism, neo-colonialism, and solidarity. Assuming SKF has an agenda, it consists of two initially, simple concepts: resistance and nuance. The themes covered by The Sámi Art Festival are not left to chance. They move within a discursive field, characterized by contrasts and ambivalence. We are talking about cultural and social domains exhibiting fraught relations and diversity. These discourses are created and maintained in contradictory, pluralistic and hegemonic ways; hence, it is difficult to pinpoint what SKF actually is compared to what it does, where, when and why. In order to operate productively in this charged discursive field, SKF itself must take on a form that eludes definition, steers clear of conventional frameworks and avoids political and social instrumentalization.

SKF is not sufficiently well defined with respect to locality, shape or thematics to be pigeonholed. Rather, the festival functions as a set of mutually contingent, linked and self-contradictory components that are simultaneously articulated. This shapelessness, which is due to an unwillingness to be just one thing, takes the form of resistance to the conventional art festival format. The spatial is not what makes The Sámi Art Festival interesting, but rather the communicative aspect as it originates in the temporary localities within the twilight zone between thematically delimited social discourses. After three years of varied productions and innumerable strands in many different places and at different times, SKF must be described as a discur-



sive format shaped so as to function temporarily within different social contexts, rather than as one composite project. So, rather than thinking of SKF as ‘something’, we should describe it through what it does.

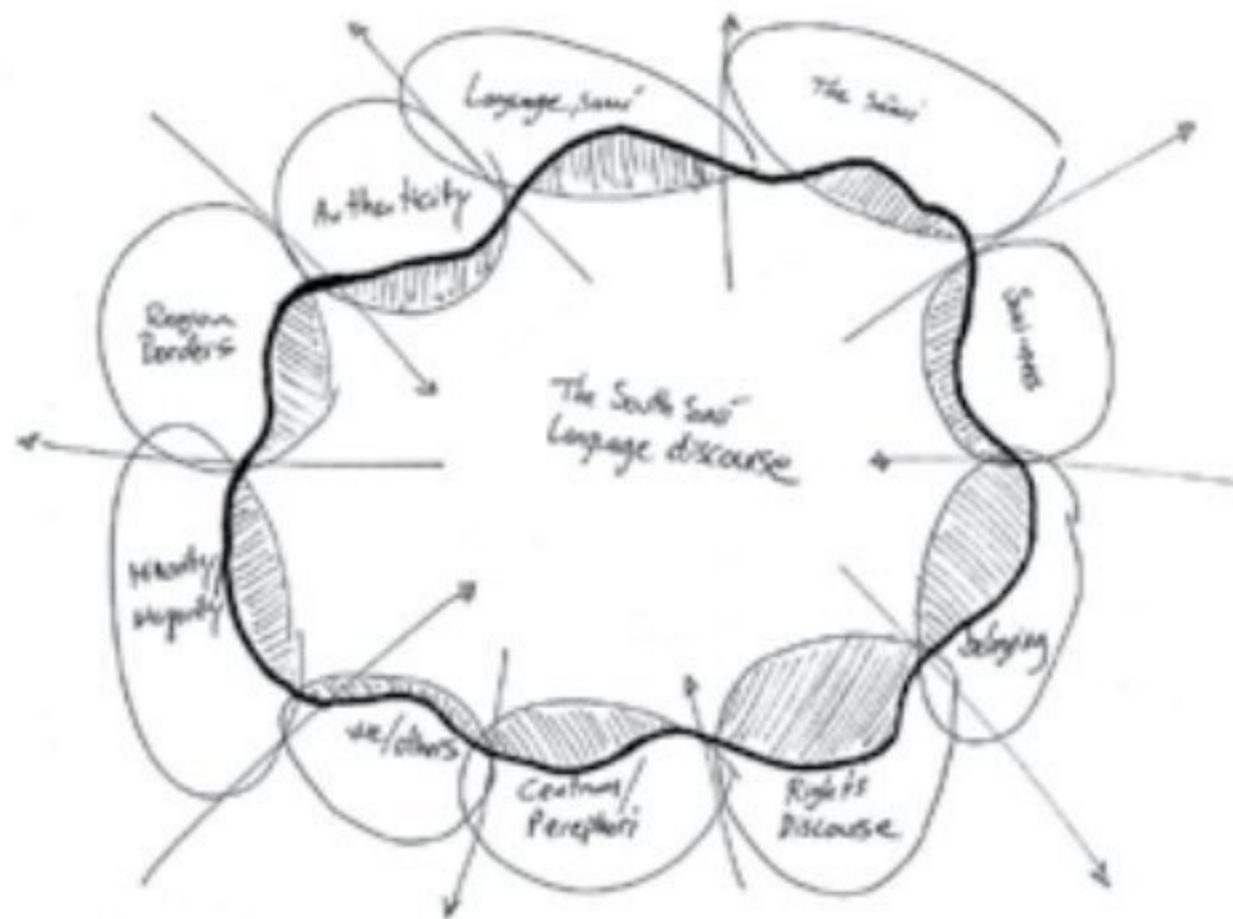
In the following account, I will explore SKF as an aesthetic format that articulates temporary positions in specific discourses, thus intervening in social life in a productive way. Specifically, in the light of this, I will take a look at Snåsa Language Symposium, an exhibition and a seminar in the South Sámi linguistic area, and discuss whether SKF has succeeded in its efforts at resistance and creating nuances in the discursive landscape.

## NEGOTIATIONS AND LIMITS IN OPINION FORMATION

My use of the word discourse, simply represents a communicative community where certain ideas are managed and where there are certain rules governing the management and communication of ideas. Somewhat stylized, one might say that a discourse represents a thematic delimitation in society, the theme serving as the core or central object of the discourse. Discourses in public spaces often appear congruent, in that positions are given, opinions are given, truths are given, etc. For example, in a discourse about the South Sámi language, ‘South Sámi’ will be the central object of the discourse, while the discourse is actually constituted by the articulation of a variety of distinctive elements. As there are actually no set principles or fundamentals of articulation, these elements may be rearticulated over and over again in different ways. Consequently, politics or truth are temporary domains of meaning that can and most commonly will be renegotiated and altered.

Due to their position in the discourse, each individual and community will be viewing themselves and the outside world through a ‘filter’. Every discourse is constituted by people communicating with each other, and is concerned with the shaping of a community of meaning; hence, every discourse is politically constituted. However, a discourse might be more or less apolitical if it is hegemonically controlled through making differences a natural thing and by excluding or depoliticizing critical voices. On the other hand, a discourse may become very politicized when the participants take very little for granted. Thus, discourses about important social subjects will ultimately depend on people’s opportunities and limitations of thought and action, and how these are managed. In the same way, art may function ‘politically’ when artists, curators or others enter into discourses where meaning is continually being created, challenged and refined. For example, critical voices

which used to be excluded may be brought into a discourse, or one might pinpoint differences which used to be invisible, thus politicizing a discourse which has previously been apolitical. This is where the SKF format is relevant. But before we can appreciate how this format influences the communicative landscape where discourses are constituted, we need to understand how the limits of a discourse are formed. The limits of any discourse are in continual flux, depending on which other discourses are being articulated in the area at any given time. The negotiations, which come in innumerable shapes and forms, are sharpest in the gray areas where the overlap is most obvious. This is where the limits to any discourse are continually being maintained and renegotiated. This may be illustrated by a discourse flower (see sketch), a methodical-analytical tool intended to delimit a discourse.



## THE DISCURSIVE FLOWER

*This example illustrates how a number of different, complementary and somewhat contradictory discourses make up the area of border negotiations between the South Sámi language and surrounding discourses. The discursive flower points to the social as basically pluralistic, where a host of thematic discourses exist on top of and around each other in society, and where conflicts are raging, possibly without ever being understood rationally. We are talking about unstable constructs that originate, develop and change due to the complex interplay of social and cultural processes of delimitation. The sketch points to some amongst the most central overlapping discourses constituting communicative communities in the Sami societies. A discourse about Sami art or South Sámi language*

*does not exist as a 'something'; it should be considered a delimitation carried out with a view to capturing social processes of this nature. The delimitation against other discourses and social fields will vary, depending on which discourses and fields surround or seem to overlap with the Sámi art world at any given time.*

Further, the thematization of, in this example the South Sámi language, will be based on the value the language has for individuals. The discourse is constituted by all small and large patterns of action, ideas and thoughts, fears and worries, joys and wishes expressed between people. The scope of the discourse may be limited to how widely and how far from the centre of the discourse there is communication based on common values that are dominant at the centre. At the periphery of the discourse, there will often be undefined landscapes where articulation between elements finds no clear or defined place. Theoretically, any point in the eternally overlapping landscape of discourses may be thought of as situated, and in principle constituted by a number of more or less arbitrary elements that are articulated together at the given point in time.

In a discourse, hegemonic structures and practices serve to exclude or include, sharing opportunities and limitations. Existing below the surface of ideas about a common public sphere or consensual forms, such structures and practices limit or make invisible, both individuals and groups. Public spaces are made up of temporary and strategic alliances consisting of a number of discursively constructed subjects and interest groups which try to frame and define what should be considered natural or given. The function of ideologies and hegemonic practices may be termed an attempt at ordering differences, that is, framing unstable or undefined meanings in the discursive field so as to stabilize the discourse. Thus, existing hegemonies, whatever consciousness tells us is natural and unproblematic, are always the outcome of previous negotiations. In that sense, a stable or hegemonically structured discourse is a communicative community that is relatively defined by a theme where opportunities and limitations have already been shared, as well as by what should be taken for granted. In this context, aesthetics provide not only an opportunity to support or criticize hegemonies; art will always be political in the sense that it exists in the public space where people communicate with each other and where social truths are created and challenged. On the other hand, as the hegemonic practices of a discourse always will draw upon what is taken for granted and given at any time, artistic intervention will be likely to itself be instrumentalized in the process.

## DOUBLE INSTRUMENTALITY

For SKF, the aim is to classify differences, rights, who is inside/outside, what may be said and done where and when, etc. The social determination tries to delimit and create a form of stable meaning in a basically pluralistic and otherwise intangible social reality. This is instrumentalism in the shape of demands for social conformity and expectations of form and content in connection with discursively constituted conventions that cause the situating process to move towards set representations of what is considered most important and natural. At the other extreme is the political instrumentalization of art, ideologically overriding and institutionally directing its course, what is usually described as instrumental art, often tied to principles of public service, forms of censorship in the shape of requirements and demands attached to economic support, political representation and the like.

Relative to the discourse about the Sámi language, this might be thought of as influences trying to open up for what it means to speak Sámi, maybe opening up for different dialects, who may learn Sámi, reducing requirements and expectations about the use and learning of the language. In this context, it is important that symbols, such as concepts and words describing what the language is, who can speak, how well you must speak it, etc., is not elaborated on too much in the public realm, as an agreed thematization of contrasts creates an impression of disagreement. The reverse side of the process that opens a discourse, is often an insufficient emphasis on communicating symbolic limits, and hence a certain lack of control with respect to the basic realities of the community of meaning. What has been under communicated is often seen to be that which is taken for granted, that need not be talked about, or that ought not to be talked about. That is why it may be perceived as threatening when outside actors enter the discourse, thematizing that which is taken for granted. For example, in Snåsa it was important not to thematize the South Sámi language as dying or threatened, despite it being listed as under threat by the UN, who have gone a long way towards legitimizing Sámi demands for rights. Thus, even an art event that emphasizes heterogeneity and diversity may unleash converging and unifying processes in a discourse, despite an apparent emphasis on diversity.

If the heterogenic processes of a discourse are carried too far, individual participants are dispatched into a maze of unclear definitions where they must engage in negotiations with their surroundings about the importance and relevance of e.g. the South Sámi language in different situations. The

discourse about the South Sámi language may be thought of as fluctuating between such extremes where at the other end of the pendulum there is a convergence where the decisive thing is that the symbols are sufficiently well defined to serve as a guide to each person's understanding of themselves and their surroundings, a driving force for action and the basis of a meaningful community. In the long run, the consequence of converging processes will be symbols that are too well defined, allowing the community to clump together around their central symbols. The individual's opportunities and scope of action are limited, and relating to the conventions upheld by the community of meaning may be frustrating and uncomfortable. As a reaction, heterogenizing processes are initiated, opening up the discourse and allowing the participants greater freedom. Severance from traditions may be thematized, as well as resistance to stereotypes, emphasis on diversity, differences and individuality. SKF has usually found itself on this side of the dualism.

For SKF it seems that a successful temporary position, that is a place from where to nuance and thematize, requires resistance to the hegemonic delimitations in production of meaning as well as the skill to refine one's own agendas relative to the dominant trends at any given point in time, with a view to heterogeneous and converging processes, what is being communicated and what is under communicated, who can say or do what, how things can be said or done, and so on. The challenge being about shaping activity within the hegemonic way of doing, while at the same time resisting social and political instrumentalization.

## POSITIONING AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AT SNÅSA

First and foremost, the Sámi Art Festival consists of people. Its legitimacy as an institution is not based on social responsibility, or set formats, and it has no rigid infrastructure, such as a locality or office. It operates without defined aims or political position. In Snåsa, it was made up of artists, curators, art historians, cultural workers, researchers, linguists, audiences at exhibitions and seminars, institutional promoters of cooperation, and so on, the key word being temporary strategic alliances between actors from several traditionally separate fields, with an emphasis on locality and thematics.

'Snåsa Language Symposium' may be most appropriately described as a situation consisting of many elements joined together in different ways, or operating concurrently. An exhibition at the South Sámi cultural centre Sae-mien Sijte put on the sound- and video work *The Last Silent Movie* (2007)

by Susan Hiller. Through different voices articulating words from different languages, the film thematizes languages that have disappeared or are in danger of disappearing. One of the most powerful artistic effects of the video is the use of voices that do not keep quiet, despite the languages having been deemed under threat or having disappeared. At the end, the film lists all languages that have been spoken in the film. South Sámi was one of the languages that were spoken in the video, and listed as under threat at the end. The second event of the situation was a seminar consisting of four lectures and four artistic presentations, all of which deal with aspects of language and linguistic communication. The third event was a rap workshop for young people, with the rapper Rolffa of Karasjok working with Sámi youngsters in Snåsa, using music and the South Sámi language. The concrete achievement of this project was a rap made by the young people in South Sámi, which was subsequently played at the seminar.

As a format, SKF is shaped by and in the position it occupies. Consisting of strategic alliances, but with no clear rootedness outside these alliances, it is difficult to position it as a single actor. Hence its social intervention takes the form of a two-sided process, both as a positioning on the sideline of the discourse and as a direct intervention in social life. On the one hand, SKF positions itself on the periphery of the central processes of the discourse in order to be able to occupy the side-line, observing things, like a kind of discursive side positioning in the processes of delimitation. For instance, this happens in closed thematic workshops and elsewhere in internal networks between actors. The position may be seen as a retreat in order to explore the- matics and find allies for social intervention. On the other hand, SKF consists of a more direct intervention in social life where the delimitation work has already been done. Among other things, this was done by organizing the Snåsa symposium about the importance of language and challenges in the rather politicized discourse about a Sámi language. SKF recruited a number of actors from a variety of surrounding and more distant discourses. In the same situation an exhibition about dead and threatened languages of the world is put on, where among others, the object of the linguistic discourse, the South Sámi language, was listed as far from being as alive and revitalized as was thematized in the discourse. Although this is manifestly confrontational material in the conventional sense, SKF still managed to create a situation that was considered legitimate. The background is this: No simple subject position is established at the festival. SKF consisted of actors who transcended their status as representatives of given positions within art worlds, academic discourses, political contexts and so on. The totality of linkages in SKF as a

temporary position must to a large extent be considered a contradiction in terms, but they still don't appear to be incidental. Inside the SKF framework, the participants at the Snåsa situation take on a number of different temporary situations relative to the discourse about the South Sámi language. They relate to text and symbols that circulate throughout the discourse in different ways, giving them meaning in situations where they can be made relevant as interpretative framework. And so there is no 'something' or 'someone' possessed by a particular policy or agenda 'interfering' with the dominant ways of doing things with a view to changing or altering things. It all becomes a situation that works and is productive in the centre of the discourse.

#### TEMPORARY POSITIONS AND PRODUCTIVE POWER

The temporary is an important aspect of this intervention. In this context, temporary means that in a landscape where the social is constituted through a series of different discourses and discursive differences, the only possible position is a temporary situating. Further, any defined place or conventional situating will be the result of discursive negotiations about who can say or do what to whom, and therefore fundamentally temporary. The temporary aspect is not, first and foremost concerned with time, but with the productive power of social arrangements. This productive power also means that any situating is defined by the underlying, conventionally taken-for-granted which in any given situation indicates what is permissible or not, available or not. Such conventions provide rules for what may or may not be said, shown or done. All communities of meaning are symbolic in the sense that they are made up of values and instructions, such as about who is included or excluded, who says significant things or not, who may legitimately govern others and who may not. In that sense, power is ubiquitous since it deals with values and instructions, about what people think and believe, deep down.

Approaching power as something productive in constituting the things that are taken for granted, is a matter of understanding the social processes of delimitation and change. While at any given time meaning is a result of representation, new representation of meaning about what may be said and what may be visible, can be the starting point of change, such as when new voices are being heard, or new knowledge becomes understandable. And so, negotiations about what at any given time should be decisive, do not occur in revolutionary frameworks, neither are they major paradigm shifts. Productive power is a matter of how people perceive reality. By being present in

the same room and responding to the productive power of what is taken for granted, art can create both social and political realities. Here, we are talking about transcendence in the most basic sense of the word, as somebody doing something in a certain way and for a purpose, at a place and a time when it is not expected. Art may participate in the discursive processes of creating meaning, provided it takes on a temporary form inside the framework of that which is taken for granted. In the case of SKF, we are not dealing with art that thematizes ordinary life and what society takes for granted, but an aesthetic format that digests the communication where the taken-for-granted functions, is shaped and challenged.

#### TO SUMMARIZE

The Sámi Art Festival is an interesting aesthetic format because it creates productive situations within discursive communities of meaning without relinquishing its own integrity. It concerns itself with things people take for granted without challenging, or by confrontation or joining existing contrary discourses. SKF uses withdrawal, strategic alliances, resistance and nuancing of its own identity in order to be present in the social space where the establishment is at play. SKF is premised on not having any clear institutional rootedness or locality, as well as being temporary, having adopted no clear political position or utilitarian stance. It eludes definition as a 'something' or as taking definite position by not representing or allowing itself to be easily linked to a political aim or socially utilitarian perspective. SKF also resists entering what is under- or over-communicated in the discourse, whether that leads to instrumentalization or localization.

In this way SKF's format outlines a way in which productive aesthetic situations may be established within existing social discourses, by establishing temporary positions. Tentatively, we might call this format a taken-for-granted aesthetic, an aesthetic that intervenes by being active within what is already delimited in the social sphere, with a certain adaptation to the discursive power of the discourse.





# Circulating Sites

Morten Torgersrud



The photographic work of Ellisif Wessel and Jorma Puranen relate to the political configurations of the landscape of northernmost Scandinavia at the beginning and end of the 20th century respectively.

Wessel's photographs were made in the context of the colonisation of the border areas in north-eastern Norway. The work appeared at the time of nationalist developments that would eventually lead to the independence of a Norwegian state in 1905. For Wessel, who was a socialist revolutionary, the political struggles related to industrialisation ran parallel to the hopes projected onto the future nation state and its promises of equality and freedom.



Puranen's body of work, *Imaginary Homecoming*, was made during the 1990s, a time when the end of the cold war and globalisation were altering the territorial and cultural thinking of the nation states. This period was also characterised by a number of conflicts between national state authorities and ethnicities from the area regarding cultural and political rights. In this situation Puranen was concerned with the production of what he has described as a counter-history. At the same time Puranen's work also appeared in the context of contemporary art in which artworks and objects are produced and distributed across the globe.

Still, the works of Wessel and Puranen do not only represent specific historical and political contexts, they also exemplify a problematic of photographic form which is related to the geographic. In this sense, the northern landscape can be thought as a model of the production and distribution of photographic images in which the history of photography is spatialised and localised.



A selection of Ellisif Wessel's photographs were reproduced in *Fra vor grændse mod Rusland* [From our border towards Russia] which was printed and distributed by Alb. Cammermeyer publishers in Kristiania in 1902. The book is structured as a diary, describing a journey that Wessel had made the previous year along the Russian-Norwegian border. Wessel spent eight days travelling: six days travelling south along the river that marked the border and two days returning the 200km downstream towards sea level. Boats had to be rowed against the current. Alternatively, they were pulled by rope or pushed using wooden poles. If it was impossible to traverse the waterfalls, boats would be dragged overland as long as the landscape allowed it. In some places the boats would have to be left behind while equipment was carried to the next level where another boat would be waiting.



The text in *Fra vor grændse mod Rusland* circles around features of the landscape with particular attention to rock formations, soil-quality, forests, wildlife, plants, lakes, and rivers. It lists place names in several of the local languages and provides a sketch of the history of the area. The text discusses the possibility of discovering iron-ore deposits and considers whether the landscape could sustain a larger population. It also refers briefly to the timber industry that was beginning to develop around the river, describing a rudimentary infrastructure of roads and canals.

Wessel used a wooden box camera that was fitted with a leather strap for handling and transportation. The camera could contain up to twenty unexposed glass plates which were held in place by a spring mechanism. Wessel would develop negatives upon returning home, making sure to open and unload the camera in total darkness. Contact prints were made by placing the glass plate negatives directly onto the surface of the photographic paper and exposing the light sensitive emulsion by letting daylight pass through the negative. The outcome of the process was an image the same size as the glass negative that was fixed onto the photographic paper.



Each of the photographs reprinted in *Fra vor grændse mod Rusland* depict an individual site along the route, except one, which shows findings from an archaeological site photographed against a white background. Wessel's pictures structure the landscape as individual sites, as if the topography is freed up into picture units by the photographic process. Photographs are placed throughout the book in accordance with the diary-narrative. In this sense, the photographs form a series of individual spatial fragments that partake in the configuration of an imagined geography. While the book projects the future space of the emancipated nation state, it is at the same time part of a colonial construction in which local specificities are incorporated as part of a certain structuring of the landscape. As the boat cut through the river current, Wessel was tracing an invisible line through the landscape, outlining the territory of the nation state. This geography belongs to the *we* implied by the *our* of the title of the book.



Much of Wessel's photographic production was lost in the destructions of the Second World War. In order to re-collect the work surviving prints were located in private collections and rephotographed. Consequently, a lot of Wessel's work now exists as copies of paper prints in the form of plastic film negatives. These copies are currently deposited in a museum in the same area where most of Wessel's images were made. Here, they are stored alongside the remaining original glass negatives which are kept individually in white paper envelopes. Based on this reconstructed archive *Fra vor grændse mod Rusland* was republished in the 1970s by a local print workshop. For this new edition Wessel's photographs were reproduced for offset printing and changes were made to the design of the cover. In this locally distributed version of the book, it is as if the photographs are brought back to the landscape where they were made in the first place, effectively reconfiguring the project as a set of localised, historical facts.

In the project *Imaginary Homecoming* Jorma Puranen used 19th-century ethnographic photographs of Sámi people sourced from various European ethnographic collections. Puranen transferred these images onto sheets of graphic film, bringing the copies to the north where they were photographed as temporary installations in the landscape. The resulting artworks take the form of photographs that document the returning of photographs to the landscape where they were originally made.





Puranen's black and white photograph *Juovlajohka* from 1991 depicts a spring time landscape partly covered in snow. It shows a number of photographs that are placed in-between bushes on a sloping hill. The photographic objects are resting on the snow, held upright by the branches of the shrubbery. Looking closely one can see that the transparent sheets of graphic film (onto which the original photographs have been copied) are fixed to thicker pieces of perspex using adhesive tape. Snow and twigs are visible through the placed photographs, as if the photographs are layered onto the terrain, much in the same way that the snow partly covers, and partly reveals, the ground.



Puranen's project depends on an understanding of photography that emphasises photography as a tool related to power where the question of representation is politicised—such as in the knowledge production within the fields anthropology or ethnography. At the same time, the understanding of the photographic technology that underlies this project also depends on the idea that photographs are (physical) entities that can be moved around in space. By enacting a return of photographs to the site of their making, Puranen's work directs attention to the implicit power relations of the geographic circulation of photographs. Photography appears here as an analogy to current processes of returning human remains from museums and scientific collections to their proper resting places.

As framed photographic objects, Puranen's works were included in exhibitions across Europe and elsewhere. Here, contemporary art space becomes yet another site where the photo-politics of distribution is played out. The work stages a situation that exposes the dislocation implicit to photographic form while at the same time repeating the displacement of the ethnographic material. In this sense, the uneven geographic distribution that Puranen tries to set straight appears together with its simultaneous displacement within the geography of contemporary art.



It seems problematic to determine the work of Wessel or Puranen as either positive or negative in terms of their respective constructions of a photographic politics of place: Puranen's humanist restoring of photographic objects comes at the cost of its continued displacement, while Wessel's colonial displacements return as located facts. In the geographical inversions of both projects photography appears as a contradictory unity of location and dislocation.



Photography represents a place bound logic in that it directs attention to a specific site, while at the same time, as image and depiction, photography also breaks up the site into distributable elements. Considered in terms of such a conjunction of mobility and fixity—in which the authenticity of location operates alongside displacement—the photographic form seems to parallel the fragmented geography of global capitalism and its system of abstraction and circulation.

While the question of whether such a fragmented and uncertain relation to place is regarded as a problem or a possibility will depend on the position from which it is considered, at the same time it seems impossible to imagine photography outside of the paradoxes of a spatial logic from which there is presently no escape.



# Contributors and Editors

## BRACKMAN, Yvette

Yvette Brackman is an American artist who lives in Copenhagen. Her work often draws upon the history of the Soviet Union from which her family emigrated in 1959. Brackman's artistic output includes creating platforms for distribution and exchange with a performative character, as well as various mediums of expression in which she uses a combination of crafted elements and time-based media to create narratives that unfold in space.

## CHRISTENSEN-SCHEEL, Boel

Boel Christensen-Scheel is an Associate Professor in Aesthetics and Art Didactics at Oslo University College. Christensen-Scheel holds a Ph.D. in contemporary art and performance theory, and her field of interest mainly concerns art's relational capacities from bodily experience, epistemology and didactics, to more explicit political and ecological projects. She has translated Nicolas Bourriaud 'Relational Aesthetics' to Norwegian (Pax Forlag, Artes, 2007), and more recently she has published an essay about Kjartan Slettemark's Nixon Series (Torpedo Press, 2010).

## DANIAUX, Magali and PIGOT, Cédric

Magali Daniaux & Cédric Pigot are an artist-duo based in Paris. They have been working together since 2001, and are aiming at developing a resolutely polymorphic work turned towards experimentation. Their practice takes its starting point in research on sound, text, and drawing, combining various visual material and communicative approaches in their fictionalizations.

HOLM, Geir Tore

Geir Tore Holm is an artist who lives and works in Skiptvet, Østfold. He has been interested in social relations and power structures, often related to his Sámi background; discussing individual identity, connecting to a larger cosmos, addressing complexities in ethnic representations and aspects of ecology. Holm is currently a Research Fellow at the Oslo National Academy for the Arts in his project *Poetics for changing aesthetics*.

KINTEL, Thomas

Thomas Kintel is a freelance culture analyzer and art mediator, based in Bergen. Holding an MA degree in Cultural Studies, he has been writing and lecturing on issues concerning the Sámi art world. He is interested in borders surrounding and defining artistic activity, and in social and cultural delimitations within different communicative spaces.

KRAMVIG, Britt

Britt Kramvig is an Associate Professor at the department of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning at the University of Tromsø. She is a social anthropologist and filmmaker of Sámi origin, living and working in Tromsø and Oslo. Her interests include music, lyrics, films, postcolonial, phenomenological, and feminist studies.

PHILLIPS, Andrea

Andrea Phillips is Reader in Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her current research project is a series of seminars and workshops on *Curating Architecture* (AHRC funded, 2006–2008) which explore the connections between practices of curating—gathering, displaying, distributing, caring for cultural product in its broadest definition—and the practices of architecture (thinking about, constructing, distributing the built environment). She lectures and publishes on the relation between politics, aesthetics and the design of space; art, architecture and cultural capital in a contemporary transnational milieu.

TORGERSRUD, Morten

Torgersrud's work considers ontological and conceptual aspects of photography and space in relation to contemporary political-economic configurations of the northern landscape.

METHI, Hilde

Hilde Methi is an independent curator and cultural worker living in Kirkenes. She is interested in economic and geopolitical issues while engaging into local, cross-border situations through various collaborative projects, often of extended duration involving certain groups of people.

TÅRNESVIK, Kristin

Kristin Tårnesvik is an artist based in Bergen. Her focus of research has developed from questioning ethnicity, geographic and national belonging in the North, to investigate political ideology and hegemonic structures. Focus in particular is upon the reciprocity between destruction and revolution, vision and utopia, and acts of the individual within a political system. She works with video, installation and photography. Tårnesvik is also a co-funder of the artist-run space Knipsu in Bergen.





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