Enacting colonised space

Katarina Pirak Sikku and Anders Sunna

ANNE HEITH

Abstract: During 2014 the Swedish city of Umeå was a European Capital of Culture, with the signature Umeå2014. In Umeå's application there was a strong focus upon the Sámi and the fact that Umeå is situated in Sápmi. Elements from Sámi culture were used in the programme and in the marketing of Umeå as a cultural capital. Bildmuseet, a museum for contemporary visual art and a part of Umeå University, was one of the institutions that contributed to the programme by commissioning works for solo exhibitions from eight artists from Sweden, Norway and Finland. The exhibitions were shown in a series called Eight Sami Artists. The article explores the function and implication of Sámi elements in Umeå2014 with a specific focus on two of the exhibitions shown at Bildmuseet: Katarina Pirak Sikku's *Nammaláhpán* and Anders Sunna's *Area Infected*. The role of the museum for problematising colonising narratives, as well as the artists' use of emotions in the production of Sámi counter narratives are themes explored.

Keywords: Critical museology, Bildmuseet, *Eight Sami Artists*, *Nammaláhpán*, *Area Infected*, racial biology, Swedish colonialism, Sámi counter narratives.

During 2014 the Swedish city of Umeå was a European Capital of Culture, launched as *Umeå2014*. Umeå's application emphasised that Umeå is situated in Sápmi and that there is a strong Sámi presence in the region. Local politicians and officials disseminated the story of Umeå's success, how citizens were involved, and how *Umeå2014* added something new to European culture by including the "northern dimension". They emphasised the Sámi presence in the region as a marketing asset, using the fact that the Sámi are the only indigenous people of northern Europe. In the debate that followed problematic aspects of the promotion

of Sámi elements were highlighted, and anticolonial Sámi narratives were produced and given space. One example of this is *Eight Sami Artists*, a series of solo exhibitions commissioned by Bildmuseet, a museum for contemporary visual art. Conflicting and contradictory narratives were disseminated by various actors who contributed to Umeå2014, among them narratives of colonial complicity, anticolonialism and decolonisation. These are themes central to Katarina Pirak Sikku's exhibition *Nammaláhpán* and Anders Sunna's *Area Infected*, which both were shown as part of the series *Eight Sami Artists*.

The series *Åtta samiska konstnärer/Eight Sami Artists* is Bildmuseet's latest major exhibition with Sámi art in focus. In 2004 the former director of the museum, Jan-Erik Lundström, curated *Same, same but different* which explores the presence of Sámi culture in the dominant culture and how this affects artists' personal life and the life of the Sámi people as a whole (Lundmark & Lundström 2004). Three of the artists represented in *Same, same but different* were also exhibited in *Eight Sami Artists*, namely Geir Tore Holm, Marja Helander and Katarina Pirak Sikku.

Katarina Pirak Sikku's and Anders Sunna's exhibitions from 2014 both deal with Swedish colonisation of Sápmi and how this affected their reindeer-herding families. Both artists use their family history extensively as material, producing narratives of Swedish colonialism and the marginalisation of the Sámi people. Works by Pirak Sikku and Sunna have previously been framed within the context of indigenous culture. In 2008 the exhibition *The Drive to Remember*, consisting of works by Greenlandic Pia Arke and Sámi Katarina Pirak Sikku, was shown at the Tromsø Gallery of Contemporary Art. The exhibition was part of the project *The Road to Mental Decolonization* and it included a seminar entitled *Healing postcolonial traumas of Nordic indigenous women*. In this particular context Katarina Pirak Sikku was one of the artists representing Nordic indigenous women exploring postcolonial trauma. The focus on alternative histories in *The Drive to Remember* corresponds to the emergence of curatorial practices developed in Scandinavia by, for example, the Danish *Kuratorisk Aktion*. However, there is a specific dynamic when exhibitions are produced within the framework of the programme of a year as a cultural capital, which potentially causes tensions between critical curatorial

methodology, the voices and works of the Sámi artists themselves, and narratives produced in order to promote a positive image of Umeå as an inclusive, dynamic community and attractive tourist destination. As *Eight Sami Artists* was produced as part of Umeå's year as a European Capital of Culture there was an international orientation in the programme. Information about the events was distributed in English as well as in Swedish. To some extent the Sámi language was used, for example in the titles of the works of Katarina Pirak Sikku, which were given in Sámi, Swedish and English in the leaflets available at Bildmuseet during the exhibition.

BILDMUSEET, UMEÅ2014 AND THE SÁMI

Bildmuseet's initiative to commission eight solo exhibitions by Sámi artists from Norway, Sweden and Finland is directly related to the strong focus on the Sámi in Umeå's application to become a European Capital of Culture. Consequently there were opportunities to receive funding for projects related to Sámi culture. The profile of the museum involves exhibiting contemporary, primarily international art and visual culture; it does not own collections of its own, its role being to produce and curate exhibitions. Bildmuseet does not have a specifically Sámi focus, but as mentioned above the museum has exhibited contemporary Sámi art previously. With *Umeå2014*, opportunities arose to include exhibitions of Sámi art in the programme. Bildmuseet actively contributed by producing the series *Eight Sami Artists*. This involved exhibiting art that is explicitly critical of Swedish nation building and the exploitation of natural resources in Sápmi.

Bildmuseet is part of the state-run Umeå University and since 2012 it has been housed in

a building by the shores of the Ume River, next to Umeå Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå Institute of Design and Umeå School of Architecture. In Sweden, as in other countries, modernity and cultural homogenisation went hand in hand, with ensuing assimilationist policies (Arvastson 1999). In contrast, Bildmuseet's way of narrating the nation was inspired by critical perspectives from postcolonial studies. From a parallel Norwegian vantage point, the art historian Monica Grini has highlighted connections between the production of art history, the constitutions and the maintenance of different nation-states: "Since the 19th century, the history of art has been considered part of the nation-state's inventory" (Grini 2014:49). On the other hand, the issue of Sámi ethnicity, exhibition practices and museology has been emphasised in academic research with a focus on the establishment of Sámi museums that rests upon the assumption that the struggle for Sámi rights involves the right of the Sámi to represent their own culture (Olsen 2000, Lien 2014, Mathisen 2015). This implies a focus on interconnections between meaning production, indigeneity and curatorial strategies. Further-more, the discourse on the geopolitics of art in connection with globalisation has been analysed by the art historian Charlotte Bydler with examples from Sámi art, briefly including Anders Sunna (Bydler 2014). Today Sámi artists are not necessarily, or not solely, framed within a nation-state context. Indigenous arts festivals are recurrently organised in Canada and Australia, as well as elsewhere, displaying works by artists from various parts of the world. There are thus multiple geographical topologies for exhibiting Sámi art: both a system of global flows and residual frameworks derived from bounded national structures, as well as the framework of the transnational, traditional homeland Sápmi.

With perspectives from postcolonial studies,

the historical suppression of ethnic, cultural and linguistic pluralism within the borders of the state may be described as the construction of a narrative about "the many as one" (Bhabha 2008:199–244). Identity loss and shame over one's cultural roots are themes related to colonialism, which are explored within the field of Sámi studies (Hirvonen 2008). These are also themes explored in the first of the exhibitions of the series *Eight Sami Artists*, Katarina Pirak Sikku's *Nammaláhpán*. Another major theme of postcolonialism which also functions as a decolonising strategy is that of "speaking back" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2009). This is the central strategy of the last exhibition of the series, Anders Sunna's *Area Infected*.

PRODUCING CORE CONTRASTS: THE HUB AND THE TENT

A touring exhibition, *Caught by Umeå* (2013), aiming at promoting Umeå's application, strove to combine a presentation of Umeå as a progressive, lively, cultural hub in northern Europe, and as an exotic place with an indigenous people, the Sámi. This dualistic image of Umeå as a future-oriented city and a traditional indigenous space is reflected in the buildings that were erected as part of the tour in the cities visited by *Caught by Umeå*. One of the buildings was called "the hub" and the other "the Nordic teepee [sic.]" On the website of *Caught by Umeå* the tour is described as follows: "Umeå and northern Sweden literally came to life in each city, setting up a hub and a Nordic teepee in a central location featuring inspiration and information about the life and culture up north in Sweden."¹ While present-day Umeå was represented by an ultra-modern construction in the shape of an inflatable cube of plastic, "the hub," Sámi culture was represented by a traditional tent of the kind

72 formerly used by nomadic reindeer herders. The naming of the constructions contributed to the creation of a binary relationship between a modern, urban centre and a pre-modern indigenous space, thus reinforcing well-established stereotypes about modern Sweden and its Sámi Others (Arvastson 1999, Mebius 1999).

On the website of the *Caught by Umeå* tour images of the hub with see-through walls contribute to shaping a narrative of a progressive city with exciting architecture and a dynamic cultural life. The role of the Sámi in this narrative is that of providing a contrast, visualised through a kind of tent, which is not part of contemporary Sámi life other than as an element from the past that has gained a new life as an identity marker in present-day cultural mobilisation and as an exotic attraction in the tourism industry. Dichotomies between the Sámi and the Swedish majority population recurred in various features of the programme of *Umeå2014*. On the day of the opening live reindeer and people dressed in traditional Sámi clothes gathered in the city centre among open fires, tents in a traditional style and an arrangement of reindeer horns. While this way of representing Sámi distinguishes between the Sámi people and the majority population, it also echoes ethnic stereotyping. This way of displaying Sáminess confirms prevailing stereotypes, namely that real Sámi people are reindeer herders who don't live in houses like other Swedes, but in tents in the mountains. These are stereotypes discussed in a brochure published by the *Sami Council's Information Centre* (Samiskt informationscentrum). Its title, *Prejudices and Explanations*, echoes why these ideas are problematic today (Skielta & Enoksson 2014).

In a study of identity formation in northern Norway, the educational scientist Gry Paulgaard

points out that reinforcing core contrasts between the majority population and groups seen as exotic and different is characteristic of the tourism industry:

In the encounter with tourists, the consumption of cultural strategies is completely opposed to the strategy in other contexts. Instead of minimizing the differences between themselves and people from centres in the south, they [people living in northern Norway] accept the idea of being perceived as exotic northerners (Paulgaard 2008:55).

According to Paulgaard the tourist industry “presents the emblematic image of the Sámi people as a counter-concept to images of modern culture” (Paulgaard 2008:56).²

While stereotypical constructions of “emblematic” Sámi reinforce dichotomies and distinctions between centre and periphery, distinguishing markers are also used by the Sámi themselves. The Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth suggests that the use of distinguishing markers is a core element of the creation of ethnic groups (Barth 1969/1999). This line of thought is taken up by Paulgaard, who emphasises the role of distinctions for the construction of identities: “Identities are created by means of experiencing similarity and differences. Encounters with differences and otherness are important to the perception of the self as distinctive in personal, social and cultural terms” (Paulgaard 2008:50).

One vital question is who benefits from the use of stereotypes and distinguishing markers. There is a difference between the Othering of Sámi people characteristic of colonialism on the one hand, and the use of ethnic symbols in Sámi cultural mobilisation on the other (Heith 2012, 2013). If Sámi entrepreneurs can make a profit by selling beer and reindeer snacks in traditional tents this is not necessarily a form of

negative exploitation; the issue of agency and gains is central for assessing the implications of using ethnic stereotyping. In the case of *Umeå2014*, the chairman of the local Sámi association made the point that although the focus on the Sámi in the programme of *Umeå2014* was not altogether positive, there were also gains for the Sámi community (Heith 2015a). Job opportunities were created for some Sámi entrepreneurs and artists and Sámi culture became more visible. The chairman also emphasised that there is a power asymmetry, the Sámi being marginalised as an effect of a colonial history and assimilationist policies. This kind of asymmetry is theorised in critical heritage studies which highlight that the notion of “community” itself is problematic if it implies the idea of a group characterised by unproblematic inclusion.

Critical heritage scholars Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton underline that the idea of the inclusive community tends to be blind to less comforting aspects of history, such as colonialism (Smith & Waterton 2012:12). They emphasise that communities may be driven by dissent and that they often bear the burden of uncomfortable histories. As a consequence of a power asymmetry, communities “are often defined by the articulate and the privileged, who are readily recognised by policymakers and professionals, leaving others to some peripheral status” (Smith & Waterton 2012:12). With this in mind the issue of Sámi elements in *Umeå2014* is related to what idea of community underlies the Sámi presence in the programme and events. Are the Sámi recognised by policymakers and professionals on the cultural arena as a group with a possible agenda of their own, as a group striving for cultural recognition, or are they seen as an unproblematic part of a communal “we”, or as an exotic asset that may be exploited in the creation of tourist attractions?

Studies of colonial complicity in the Nordic countries suggest that prevailing self-images of the Nordic nation-states as exceptionally democratic and inclusive tend to suppress the fact that groups have been marginalised and defined as the Others (Keskinen *et al.* 2009). The issue of exploitation of the Sámi is a recurring theme, which also was part of the discussion about Sámi elements in *Umeå2014*. When the programme was planned, Sámi organisations were invited to give comments. Still there were diverse opinions about whether the Sámi were being exploited once again.

EIGHT SAMI ARTISTS

The choice of artists for the exhibition series *Eight Sami Artists* was the result of a process which included inviting a number of artists to present their work and ideas. In a dialogue with Bildmuseet's personnel, eight artists were finally chosen to contribute to the series called *Eight Sami Artists* with a solo exhibition each. According to Bildmuseet's director Katarina Pierre, who curated the exhibitions together with Sofia Johansson, the choices were made based on the quality of the works and the potential of the ideas presented. There was a wish on the museum's part to exhibit works made by artists working in different media. In order to be commissioned the artists had to be comfortable with being presented specifically as Sámi artists (Heith 2015b).³ The reason for choosing eight artists was that the Sámi year traditionally is divided into *eight* seasons, the idea being that there would be one exhibition for every season. The concept of eight Sámi seasons was widely spread in the marketing of *Umeå2014*, for example in the dissemination of brochures for every season containing presentations of the programme.

74 The artists invited to produce one exhibition each were:

- Katarina Pirak Sikku, Sweden: *Nammaláhpán*
- Marja Helander, Finland: *Silence*
- Per Enoksson, Sweden: *The Forest in Me*
- Liselotte Wajstedt, Sweden: *The Lost One*
- Carola Grahns, Sweden: *A Cry From the Expanses*
- Joar Nango and FFB (Felleskapsprosjektet å fortette byen), Norway: *Searching for Smooth Space*
- Geir Tore Holm, Norway: *Fughetta*
- Anders Sunna, Sweden: *Area Infected*

All artists who contributed to the series *Eight Sami Artists* in various ways used elements from Sámi cultural heritage in artworks using contemporary forms of expression, materials and media. As in previous works, Marja Helander features herself dressed in a traditional Sámi “kolt” in a video installation, *Trambo*, which is part of *Silence*. Per Enoksson’s *The Forest in Me* is an installation which includes a version of a Sámi traditional building, a “goahti,” covered by red fabric instead of peat. It was shown on a roof terrace outside the museum. In a video accompanying the installation Enoksson draws parallels between his construction and Native Americans’ sweat lodges. A central component of *The Lost One* by the artist and filmmaker Liselotte Wajstedt is the sewing of a “kolt.” In a film the artist sews a “kolt” for her grandmother using a sewing machine she inherited from her. The fabric has printed images from the grandmother’s life. The finished garment is shown in the exhibition along with a photograph of Liselotte Wajstedt wearing it.

According to Bildmuseet’s information brochure made for Carola Grahns exhibition,

the sound installation *A Cry From the Expanses*, the title alludes to “a conception of nature as our collective awareness, and an idea that when people do not speak about hard times, the expanses cry out their truths”⁴. The public was invited to take part of the installation by a dying pine tree, which marked the site of the installation on a terrace outside the museum. The sound of “yoik”, reindeer with bells and barking dogs, all elements of a traditional Sámi soundscape were heard from loudspeakers. Particularly the sound of “yoik” and moving reindeer are familiar as Sámi identity markers, not least through Nils-Aslak Valkeapää’s poetry and recordings (Gaski 2008, Heith 2010:348).

The ambition of the artworks *Searching for Smooth Space* was to intervene in public spaces in Umeå. Together with the collective of architects FFB, the architect Joar Nango stayed for two weeks in Umeå. During the project the building of a traditional Sámi “goahti” was initiated at a part of Umeå called Haga. The idea was that the citizens of Umeå, who were invited to a seminar about traditional building techniques, would finish the building and use it as a communal house.

Inspired by *Umeå2014*’s seasonal theme, Geir Tore Holm presented a version of a chandelier consisting of five reindeer carcasses at the opening of *Fughetta* on 12 October. At dusk, light bulbs were lit inside the epoxy carcasses, producing a red glow. At the opening Holm made connections between reindeer meat and light as two conditions of great significance for human survival in the North. He specifically made connections between autumn and slaughter; for reindeer-herding Sámi, slaughtering and rut were part of the time of year called “tjakttja,” usually translated as autumn.⁵

The first and the last exhibitions of the series, Katarina Pirak Sikku’s *Nammaláhpán* and

Anders Sunna's *Area Infected*, differ from the others by explicitly producing a straightforward narrative of Swedish racism and colonialism. This narrative is charged with strong emotions highlighted by the artists themselves as driving forces for their work. The exhibitions are manifestly political, critical of Swedish colonialism and abuse of the Sámi people.

EMOTIONS AND THE SHAPING OF SUBJECTIVITIES AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

In her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* the critical queer scholar Sara Ahmed explores how emotions work to shape “the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies” (Ahmed 2014:1). According to Ahmed bodies take the shape of the contact they have with objects and others. A theme she explores is how subjects are aligned with collectives by “attributing ‘others’ as the ‘source’ of our feeling” (Ahmed 2014:1). According to Ahmed, becoming a subject and a collective involves working on emotions which shape the relationship between “me” and “you”, as well as “us” and “them”. In several of the exhibitions of *Eight Sami Artists* there is a vein of sorrow giving shape to a collective Sámi history, distinguishing between a Sámi “us” and a Swedish “them”. This kind of use of emotions may be described with Ahmed’s analysis of the uses of emotions in performances of subjectivities and collective identities. With this in mind Sámi artworks dealing with sorrow, pain, anger and frustration may be interpreted as performances of subjectivities and collective identities evolving against the backdrop of racial discrimination and colonialism. In *Eight Sami Artists* this is particularly the case with Pirak Sikku’s (born 1965) and Sunna’s (born 1985) contributions.

Ever since she graduated from Umeå

Academy of Fine Arts in 2005 Katarina Pirak Sikku has dwelt upon the question “Can sorrow be inherited?” In material disseminated in connection with the exhibition *Nammaláhpán* Pirak Sikku describes how she built a room in her studio with the intention of collecting everything there that had caused pain in her life. Questions arose whether experiences of

Fig. 1. Katarina Pirak Sikku, *Suoláduvvon álásvuohhta/Stolen Nakedness/Bestulen nakenhet(detail)*, 2014. The work is Pirak Sikku’s adaption of the genre of photographs of naked people collected in archives. Instead of using photographs the artist has made drawings depicting nine different poses. The drawings are based on photographs of her own naked body. Photo: Polly Yassin, Bildmuseet, Umeå.

76 pain were related solely to her own, personal emotions, or if they were experiences shared by others. In a process to find out, Pirak Sikku started to meet eight Sámi women whom she did not know previously. The meetings took place over a year. She describes it as inviting them into her room. The women shared stories and looked at Pirak Sikku's works. In the discussion that followed they raised the questions as to whether there is a Sámi shared history, and what this history might be. This process is described by Pirak Sikku as the starting point which made it possible for herself to sort out her own private history.

The process also led her to explore the theme of Swedish racial biology in her works exhibited as part of *Eight Sami Artists*.⁶ *Nammaláhpán* is an exhibition consisting of ten works that were exhibited on the entire third floor of Bildmuseet (fig.1). The title "Nammaláhpán" is a Sámi word referring to ageing reindeer that have lost their names. Pirak Sikku uses the term metaphorically, making connections between reindeer without names and unnamed Sámi people who were included in the documents of racial biological archives during the twentieth century. When they were included in the material, they lost their names and were reduced to numbers, according to Pirak Sikku. One of the works of *Nammaláhpán* is entitled *Nammaláhpáhiid nammalisttu* (The List of the Nameless). In this work, Pirak Sikku has entered her own measurements on an authentic list from *Anthropometry of the Swedish Lapps* from 1941 by Sten Wahlund. Another work, *Muitobálgát* (The Map of Memories), includes drawings directly on the white museum's wall aiming at exploring the exploits of Swedish racial biologists in Sápmi. The exploration begins in the archives in Uppsala where material produced within the field of racial biology is kept. A photograph

of the building where the Swedish State Institute for Racial biology was housed is accompanied by a text in handwriting in which Pirak Sikku makes a personal comment about the pain caused by the Institute and its director, the once successful racial biologist Herman Lundborg. The Institute, founded in 1922, played an important role during some decades in endeavours to keep the Nordic race pure. One of the fears of the time was that the Swedish population would degenerate if it were mixed with other races seen as inferior (Lundborg 1921, Lundborg 1922, Lundborg & Linders 1926).

In one of the texts written in hand directly on the wall Pirak Sikku comments upon the role of Lundborg for her personally:

It is easier to be angry with an individual than a system. Lundborg has been my catalyst. Then I talked with Maja Hagerman. She is making a documentary. Somebody else is telling. I can leave it an [sic] continue working with my perspective (my translation).⁷

The documentary alluded to is Maja Hagerman's film *Hur gör man för att rädda ett folk?* (How do you go about saving a people?) from 2015. The film presents Herman Lundborg and his great interest in measuring and cataloguing the Sámi and Finno-Ugric people in northernmost Sweden. The film deals with a theme similar to that of Pirak Sikku's exhibition, featuring interviews with an old Sámi woman who was examined by racial biologists, as well as interviews with descendants of people who were examined. The old woman is at first reluctant to acknowledge that she was measured, but eventually she tells about the experience and the shame, and pain, connected with it which made it difficult to deal with it afterwards. In connection with the exhibition of *Nammaláhpán* Bildmuseet

arranged a dialogue between Maja Hagerman and Katarina Pirak Sikku with a focus on their respective explorations of Swedish racial biology.

Another element of history that causes pain is that of compulsory transfers of Sámi villages when the state took over their land. In the part of the exhibition called *Map of Memories* this theme is touched upon in sketches drawn on the wall, accompanied by handwritten text, telling the story of how Pirak Sikku's family members had to leave their lands when the state decided to dam rivers. This damming of rivers, for the purpose of getting cheap electricity generated by hydro-electric power plants, is characteristic of a colonial paradigm whereby the lands and natural resources traditionally used by indigenous peoples are taken over by the state (Smith 2008). It is also a practice which is strongly criticised by organisations working for the rights of indigenous peoples. The 1989 *ILO Convention 169*, which guarantees the rights of indigenous peoples (Kulonen *et al.* 2005:148–149), is the most important operative international law which has evolved through the efforts of the International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-determination and Liberation. Sweden, however, has not ratified the convention.

THE ARTIST AS A STATELESS PERSON IN A COLONISED SPACE

The issue of the use of natural resources is still on the agenda, causing controversies between Sámi communities and the Swedish state. One such controversial issue is related to ore mining in areas used by the Sámi.⁸ A recent example that engaged activists was the plan to start a mine at Gallók/Kallak in the Jokkmokk area, Norrbotten County. One of the artists who joined the protest movement was Anders

Sunna. On the website of a photographer who published pictures from Gallók/Kallak, Sunna is seen on a black and white photograph with the subtitle “The artist Anders Sunna examines explosives left behind by Beowulf Mining in Gallók/Kallak” (Samuelsson 2013, my translation).⁹ Another photograph shows an artwork Sunna made to support the protest movement.

Sunna studied painting at the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm (Konstfack). His art has recently been exhibited in both Gothenburg and Stockholm. The exhibition *Maadtoe*, made together with the photographer Michiel Brouwer, was shown at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg between 10 October 2014 and 15 February 2015. “Maadtoe” is a South Sámi term meaning “origin”. In April 2015 Sunna was one of ten artists who had been chosen to exhibit their work in Stockholm in a presentation of contemporary art from Norrbotten in the north of Sweden. One of the works by Sunna was the painting *Area Infected*, originally commissioned for the series *Eight Sami Artists at Bildmuseet*. As Bildmuseet does not collect art, there was an agreement that after the exhibition the artists were free to exhibit their works in other contexts as they own them and the rights to them (Heith 2015b).

Maadtoe as well as *Area Infected* use subject matter from Sámi history in general, and Sunna's family history in particular. Racism, Sámi politics, relocations and oppressions of the Sámi, with a focus on Sunna's own family in the Torne Valley, are central themes. *Area Infected* is a large painting covering the greater part of a wall in the room in which it was exhibited at Bildmuseet. The subject of the painting is a long-running conflict between Sunna's family and the Norrbotten County Administration. The conflict arose in connection with the 1971

78 *Reindeer Husbandry Act*, which according to Anders Sunna was misinterpreted.¹⁰ The conflict was intensified, and in 1982 Sunna's family and reindeer owners who stood on their side in the conflict lost their reindeer earmarks, implying that they could no more work with reindeer husbandry legally. The family was forcibly removed from Sattajärvi Sámi village to Muonio Sámi village with the help of a police patrol, and, according to Sunna, reindeer owners from Sattajärvi who wanted the Sunna family away from there. In Sunna's narrative, the continuing conflict involves elements like the building of a 30 kilometre long fence for taxpayers' money in order to ensure that the Sunna family's reindeer could not return to their area of origin. Another element of the conflict is that the Sunna family's reindeer disappeared in mysterious ways – according to Sunna they were stolen and slaughtered.

In the material disseminated in connection with the exhibition *Area Infected* Sunna recounts his family history as a background to the painting, underlining that for him personally art became a means to channel feelings of anger and frustration: "one was involved in the struggle almost from the day one was born; [...]. I began to understand more about this in my teens when I was deeply involved, using art as a weapon, in telling our story and attempting to create a will to change." Sunna expresses a sense of exclusion from Swedish society and a strong feeling of having been treated unjustly: "People say that in Sweden we live in a democratic society; this is not something which I experience. I am a stateless person in a dictatorship."¹¹ These are Sunna's words in the material produced by *Bildmuseet* for the purpose of explaining the historical, cultural and ideological context of *Area Infected*. Sunna's depiction of alienation in a Swedish national context is not countered by ideas

of all-encompassing solidarity among Sámi people. Among the adversaries of the Sunna family depicted in *Area Infected* there are Sámi people. While the family history presented by Sunna highlights Swedish colonialism, it also deals with the theme of Sámi collaborators and antagonism between Sámi people, although this is not a major theme of the work.

The painting itself combines different materials and techniques (fig. 2). Seen from a distance it consists of various sections depicting a corral, police cars and police officers, the Social Democratic politician Björn Rosengren with a huge reindeer carcass in front of him, a group of men in brown, Nazi uniform-like clothes, and a portrait of Curt Birger Boström in the centre of the painting. Rosengren and Boström have both been county governors of Norrbotten; Boström 1985–1991 and Rosengren 1995–1998. In 1998 Rosengren became a Minister for Enterprise and Energy. Behind the portrait of Boström there is a building with a sign indicating that it is a shop. At the opening of *Area Infected* Sunna said that the building in fact was the place where reindeer stolen from his family had been taken in secret to be dismembered after having been slaughtered.¹²

While the painting criticises Swedish authorities, representatives of the local authorities, Sámi collaborators, and the state, it also provides a space for speaking back (cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2009). In the colonised space depicted by Sunna police officers and politicians representing authorities wear armlets reminiscent of military attire. County Governor Boström's armlet with an easily recognisable modification of the county arms of Norrbotten shows a giant clubbing a reindeer. The portrait of Rosenberg has rivulets of paint running down the face, giving the impression of dripping blood. The paint

Fig. 2. Anders Sunna, *Area Infected*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Polly Yassin, Bildmuseet, Umeå.

in question has not been applied through the use of a brush. The impression given is that it has been thrown at the image, or else poured over Rosengren's painted face. *Area Infected* contains a great number of details emphasising a history of colonialism, racism, abuse and injustices. For example, images of Sámi people from the archives of racial biologists are included in the background layer as well as images of skulls. The collage technique is also used for portraying politicians that, according to Sunna, were responsible for the conflict his

family still experiences.¹³ In the group of men in brown, military-style attire, one man's face is made from a photograph of the face of a local politician.

PERFORMING IDENTITY AND ENACTING PLACE

Reindeer are a prominent element of the narrative of Swedish colonialism presented by Pirak Sikku and by Sunna. Both relate to family histories of loss of pastures, and

80 of displacement. Pirak Sikku's choice of the name *Nammaláhpán* connoting loss, and Sunna's choice of the name *Area Infected* connoting disease, contribute to enacting Sápmi as a colonised space where people have been abused, disempowered and deprived of their cultural identity and their land. The construction of a Sámi "us" performed by Pirak Sikku's and Sunna's works employs the strategy described by Sara Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014) which implies the establishment of binaries between a Sámi "us" and a Swedish "them." This does not necessarily imply the construction of a homogeneous Sámi "us". In the narrative produced by Sunna's work and statements in the exhibition leaflet there are Sámi people who contribute to the plight of the Sunna family. Both artists engage in a form of speaking back which functions as a strategy in the present-day Sámi struggle for cultural and political recognition. The narrative of Umeå and northern Sweden produced by Pirak Sikku's and Sunna's artworks is not a heart-warming tale of progression and inclusion, but the narrative of a colonised, indigenous people subjected to racism and enforced relocations. In *Nammaláhpán* and *Area Infected* feelings of sorrow, frustration and anger shape Sámi subjectivities and collective identities, enacting a space where a Sámi nation experiencing injury and injustice is distinguished in opposition to a colonising state. *Nammaláhpán* and *Area Infected* testify to the fact that places do not simply exist, but come into being through human activities. In Pirak Sikku's and Sunna's works Umeå is part of a Sápmi enacted through human encounters, activities, as well as emotions, memories and narratives produced by people's responses (cf. Bærenholdt & Granås 2008).

Pirak Sikku's and Sunna's narratives of identity loss, racism and colonised space are

produced through the initiative of Bildmuseet, Umeå University, which also has functioned as a dialogue partner for the artists during the process in which the artists were selected. By giving eight Sámi artists the opportunity to produce work reflecting experiences, memories and stories of a group whose traditional homeland, Sápmi, some see as still being colonised, the museum actively contributed to the production of a narrative of Swedish colonialism. The exhibitions also drew attention to the history of Swedish racism. One prerequisite for the presentation of alternative, suppressed narratives was that the Sámi artists were given the opportunity to represent and express *themselves*. This theme was addressed by the chairman of the local Sámi association in Umeå; he emphasised that agency was important and that Sámi people should be given the opportunity to "speak with their own voice" (Heith 2015a). Information material has been produced and events arranged in connection with the exhibitions, which have emphasised the themes of racism, racial biology, compulsory transfers and colonialism. Thus, Bildmuseet played an active role in deconstructing a homogenising narrative of the Swedish nation as a story of the many as one. While the main focus of Bildmuseet is to exhibit contemporary, international art, the museum also has a history of exhibiting Sámi art related to the cultural landscape of northern Scandinavia, and the contemporary global world with flows between cultural traditions and geographic locations. Because of the focus on the Sámi in Umeå's application to become a European Capital of Culture, opportunities arose to receive funding for the production of exhibitions of Sámi art. As a consequence of Bildmuseet's successful application to *Umeå2014*, space was given to expressions of anticolonial resistance and Sámi activism within the museum.

NOTES

1. *Caught by Umeå*, "Tour", <http://www.caughtbyumea.com/competition-tour/> (accessed 15 April 2015).
2. This theme is developed in Olsen 2003.
3. One artist who had been invited to the selection process withdrew as she was not comfortable with the exhibitions' focus on Sámi ethnicity (Heith 2015b).
4. Bildmuseet 25 May–7 September 2014 Carola Grahn/Vidderna ropa.
5. *Renbiten*. "Samernas åtta årstider", <http://renbiten.se/samernas-atta-arstider/> (accessed 21 April 2015).
6. Bildmuseet 31 January–20 April 2014 Katarina Pirak Sikku/Nammaláhpán.
7. "Det är lättare att vara arg på en person än ett system. Lundborg har varit min katalysator. Så pratade jag med Maja Hagerman. Hon gör en dokumentär. Någon annan berättar. Jag kan släppa o jobba med mitt perspektiv."
8. Webpage of The Sami Parliament, "Minerals and Mines in Sápmi", <http://www.sametinget.se/mining> (accessed 23 April 2015).
9. Samuelsson, Johannes 2013. "Konstnären Anders Sunna inventerar Beowulf Minings efterlämnade sprängutrustning i Gallók/Kallak.", *Bilder från Kallak/Gállók och Jokkmokk, Provins 4*, 2013, <http://www.it-is.se/node/210> (accessed 23 April 2013).
10. Bildmuseet 2 November 2014–1 February 2015 Anders Sunna/Area Infected.
11. Quote from note 10.
12. Sunna's talk at the opening of *Area Infected* at Bildmuseet, Umeå, 2 November 2014.
13. See note 12.

OTHER PRINTED MATTER

Bildmuseet 25 May–7 September 2014 Carola Grahn/Vidderna ropa.
 Bildmuseet 31 January–20 April 2014 Katarina Pirak Sikku/Nammaláhpán.

Bildmuseet 2 November 2014–1 February 2015
 Anders Sunna/Area Infected.

FILM

Hagerman, Maja & Claes Gabrielson 2015. *Hur gör man för att rädda ett folk?* Produced by Världsålder AB/Maja Hagerman, Filmpool Nord and SVT.

INTERNET SOURCES

Bildmuseet's webpage, <http://www.bildmuseet.umu.se/en/about/about-bildmuseet/> (accessed 7 April 2014).
 Bildmuseet's website: <http://umea2014.se/en/project/8-samiska-konstnere/> (accessed 7 April 2015).
Caught by Umeå, "Tour", <http://www.caughtbyumea.com/competition-tour/> (accessed 15 April 2015).
 ILO Convention No. 169, <http://www.ilo.org/indigenous/Conventions/no169/lang--en/index.htm> (accessed 9 March 2015).
 Kuratorisk Aktion, <http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org/files/header/ka.htm> (accessed 13 May 2015).
Renbiten, "Samernas åtta årstider", <http://renbiten.se/samernas-atta-arstider/> (accessed 21 April 2015).
 Samuelsson, Johannes 2013. "Konstnären Anders Sunna inventerar Beowulf Minings efterlämnade sprängutrustning i Gallók/Kallak." *Bilder från Kallak/Gallók och Jokkmokk. Provins 4*, 2013, <http://www.it-is.se/node/210> (accessed 23 April 2013).
 The Sami Parliament, "Minerals and Mines in Sápmi", <http://www.sametinget.se/mining> (accessed 23 April 2015).
Umeå2014's website, "Om programåret – de åtta samiska årstiderna Höst", <http://umea2014.se/sv/de-8-samiska-arstiderna/host/> (accessed 21 April 2015).

82 INTERVIEWS

- Heith, Anne 2015a. Interview with Michael Lindblad, chairman of Sáhkie, Umeå Sámi Association, 10 April 2015.
- Heith, Anne 2015b. Interview with Katarina Pierre, director of Bildmuseet, Umeå, 13 April 2015.

LITERATURE

- Ahmed, Sara 2004/2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Arvastson, Gösta 1999. "Inledning." In Gösta Arvastson (ed.). *Järnbur eller frigörelse? Studier i moderniseringen av Sverige*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 9–24.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin 2009. *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole & Brynhild Granås 2008. "Places and mobilities beyond the periphery." In Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt & Brynhild Granås (eds.). *Mobility and Place. Enacting Northern Peripheries*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 1–10.
- Barth, Fredrik 1969/1999. "Introduction." In Fredrik Barth (ed.). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 9–38.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 2008. "DissemiNation. Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation." In Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. London & New York: Routledge, 199–244.
- Bydler, Charlotte 2014. "Art, geographies and values. Thinking Sami contemporary art archipelagically." In Charlotte Bydler & Cecilia Sjöholm (eds.). *Regionality/Mondiality. Perspectives on Art, Aesthetics and Globalization..* Huddinge: Södertörns Högskola, 153–171.
- Gaski, Harald 2008. "Nils-Aslak Valkeapää. Indigenous voice and multimedia artist." *AlterNative*, 4:2, 156–178.
- Grini, Monica 2014. "Historical reflections on Sámi art and the paradigm of the national in Norwegian art history." In Charis Gullickson & Sandra Lorentzen (eds.). *Sámi Stories. Art and Identity of an Arctic People*. Stamsund: Orkana forlag, 49–67.
- Heith, Anne 2010. "Särskiljandets logik i en kolonial och en antikolonial diskurs. Nils-Aslak Valkeapääs *Beaivi áhčážan*." *Edda. Nordisk tidskrift för litteraturvetenskap*, 4, 335–350.
- Heith, Anne 2012. "Aesthetics and ethnicity. The role of boundaries in Sámi and Tornedalian art." In Lars Jensen & Kristín Loftsdóttir (eds.). *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 159–173.
- Heith, Anne 2013. "Challenging and negotiating national borders. Sámi and Tornedalian alterNative literary history." In Hein Viljoen (ed.). *Crossing Borders, Dissolving Boundaries*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 75–91.
- Hirvonen, Vuokko 2008. *Voices from Sápmi. Sámi Women's Path to Authorship*. Kautokeino: DAT.
- Keskinen, Suvi et al. (eds.) 2009. *Complying with Colonialism*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate.
- Kulonen, Ulla-Maija et al. (eds.) 2005. *The Saami. A Cultural Encyclopaedia*. Vammala: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Lien, Sigrid 2014. "The aesthetics of the bear hunt. Contemporary photography in the ecology of a Sámi museum." In Elisabeth Edwards & Sigrid Lien (eds.). *Uncertain Images. Museums and the Work of Photography*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 95–112.
- Lundborg, Herman 1921. "Degenerationsfaran." *Svensk Tidskrift*, 275–285.
- Lundborg, Herman 1922. *Degenerationsfaran och riktlinjer för dess förebyggande*. Stockholm: Norstedts.
- Lundborg, Herman & F. J. Linders 1926. *The Racial Characters of the Swedish Nation. Anthropologia Suecica*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Lundmark, Anna-Lena & Jan-Erik Lundström (eds.) 2004. *Same, same but different*. Umeå: Bildmuseet, Umeå University.

- Mathisen, Silje Opdahl 2015. "Etnisitetens estetikk. Visuelle fortellinger og forhandlinger i samiske museumsutstillinger". *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning*, 4, 70–75.
- Mebius, Anders 1999. "Föreställningen om samerna som de Andra." In Gösta Arvastson (ed.). *Järnbur eller frigörelse? Studier i moderniseringen av Sverige*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 106–118.
- Olsen, Bjørnar 2000. "Bilder fra fortida? Representasjoner av samisk kultur i samiske museer". *Nordisk Museologi* 2, 13–30.
- Olsen, Kjell 2003. "The touristic construction of the 'emblematic' Sámi." *Acta Borealia*, 20:1, 3–20.
- Paulgaard, Gry 2008. "Re-centring periphery. Negotiating identities in time and space." In Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt & Brynhild Granås (eds.). *Mobility and Place. Enacting Northern Peripheries*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 49–59.
- Skielta, Anna & Marie Enoksson 2014. *Fördomar och förklaringar*. Östersund: Samiskt informationscentrum, Sametinget.
- Smith, Laurajane & Emma Waterton 2012. *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology*. London: Bristol Classical Press.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai 2008. *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Anne Heith, Dr Art, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, affiliated to the Centre for Sami Research, CeSam/Vaartoe, and the Arctic Research Centre, Arcum, Umeå University*
anne.heith@umu.se
- Department of Culture and Media Studies*
Umeå University
SE- 901 87 Umeå, Sweden
<http://www.kultmed.umu.se/om-institutionen/personal/anne-heith>