

PILE O'SÁPMI AND THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ART AND POLITICS

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Pile o'Sápmi by the Sámi artist Máret Anne Sara (b. 1984) reveals how a contemporary Sámi artist and her art project connects to art and politics in different ways. To connect art and politics has a long tradition in the Sámi cultural history, stretching back to *Muitalus Sámiid Birra* ('An Account of the Sámi') (1911). This was the first book by a Sámi artist and author, Johan Turi. He had a clear political goal with his illustrated text, as he aimed to describe the Sámi culture from a Sámi perspective to enlighten people about the threatened indigenous culture (Turi, 2012). Subsequent Sámi artists also had a political agenda, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s when art and artists played an important role in the evolving ethno-political movement (Hansen, 2014).

Initially, *Pile o'Sápmi* was an outdoor, site-specific event. It was, however, in a transition from the beginning. From several different displays of the project in Sápmi, it travelled to Germany and Documenta, one of the grand, controversial international art exhibitions. From there, it returned to Norway and Oslo before it was acquired by the Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design for their collection. This text investigates the transitions of *Pile o'Sápmi* project and how through shifting contexts and spaces the connection between the art project and politics changed.



Figure 1. *Pile o'Sápmi* (2016) in Tana. Two hundred raw reindeer heads, one Norwegian flag (photo: Iris Egilsdatter). ©Máret Ánne Sara/BONO 2019.

Art Activism

In February 2016, *Pile o'Sápmi* was on display for the first time. This event took place outside of Indre Finnmark District Court in the municipality of Tana in northernmost Norway. Inside the court, Máret Ánne Sara's brother Jovsset Ánde Sara initiated his public proceedings against the Norwegian state to challenge the obligatory reduction of his reindeer-herd by order of the Norwegian Reindeer Herding Act of 2007. The reduction, he claimed, would lead to his economic ruin and a loss of cultural practice and way of life as a Sámi (Pile O'Sápmi, 2018).

The artwork outside the court building showed a pile of 200 raw reindeer heads (Figure 1). The heads were piled in a cone shape with a small Norwegian flag waving at the top. The heads were frozen but bleeding, and they still had eyes, lips, brains and fur. The blood made stains on the white snow as light showers covered the pile with a transparent, white film. Sara brushed the snow carefully away when necessary as if she was caring for the dead heads while making them visible to the audience. Social media and a dedicated website were used to document and disseminate the artistic project as well as the legal case.

Initially, the project had the character of what the philosopher and art critic Boris Groys calls art activism or the ability of art to function as an arena and medium for

political protest and social activism. He claims that art activism is a way of designing or aestheticising political performance. He also emphasises the fluid character of such art because rather than producing and admiring specific objects, art activism produces artistic events, performances and temporary exhibitions and thereby enters the flow of time (Groys, 2016). Groys' description of art activism could be a description of *Pile o'Sápmi* as it was presented in Tana. It was an artistic event; a physical but temporary artwork and a dedicated website all connected to a political protest and a specific site and case. As this was a beginning, both the legal case and the art project entered the flow of time.

Máret Anne Sara is an artist, author, designer, organiser and journalist. She lives and works in Guovdageaidnu, where she grew up in a reindeer herding family. The name Guovdageaidnu means 'midway', explaining the location as the midway between Karesuando on the Finnish side of Sápmi and Alta on the Norwegian side. In other words, in the middle of Sápmi and in the proximity of other villages—a place for travellers to stop, a place for encounters and exchanges.

She has been displaying her artworks at group exhibitions since 2003. Her first solo exhibition was in 2006 at Sámi Siida Museum, which is located in Enare in Finland. Since then, she has regularly been exhibiting, both in Sápmi and internationally (Maret Anne Sara/Profile, 2018). In addition to her artistic practice, she also plays the key role of an organiser among contemporary Sámi artists as the initiator of Dáiddadállu Artist Collective (Dáiddadállu, 2019). The artist collective was founded in 2014 intending to form a stronger art environment in Guovdageaidnu and in Sápmi where professional artists could have the opportunity to work with the Sámi culture as a natural, living and breathing foundation for their practice. Today Dáiddadállu houses nearly 20 artists from different fields of art. There are visual artists, multimedia and filmmakers, graphic designers, authors, musicians, dancers and crafters (Dáiddadállu -Maret Anne Sara, 2018). The organiser role underlines the art activist character of her practice as she makes things happen as much as she produces art objects.

In the Flow

In June 2016, Sara was invited to exhibit at *Festspillene i Nord-Norge* (Arctic Arts Festival), an annual festival in Harstad on the coast of northern Norway. She was invited to participate together with other Sámi artists concerning a concert called *Lapp Affair - Unfinished Business*. To prepare for Harstad, Sara skinned 150 reindeer heads and removed all soft parts, such as the eyes, brains, lips and jawbones. She then boiled and dried what was left of the heads (i.e. the skulls). The reason for this was probably the difference of temperature in Harstad in June, which is much higher than in Tana in February causing raw heads to rot and become a smelly, fly-attracting pile of garbage. Hence, the work on display in Harstad, labelled *Pile o'Sápmi – Shouts from the Shit Flood* (Figure 2), was different from the one in Tana.

When skinned, the bullet holes in the foreheads of the skulls became visible, revealing how they were put to death by one shot to the forehead by a pistol. In

Harstad, the skulls were piled in a cone shape as in Tana; however, on the top of the pile, the upper body of a female human made of plastic and tape was added. In each hand, she was holding a jawbone pointing to the human head as a suicidal gesture. The installation rested upon a plinth of the packed canvas, making the whole installation two metres high. It was placed outside Harstad Kulturhus ('Harstad Culture House') where the concert was performed. In Harstad, no trial took place, and the project was transferred to a different site, season and context (i.e. an art festival). This first transition set the project out in the flow of time.

Tromsø 2017

Jovsset Ánde Sara won his case in the District Court; however, the Norwegian government appealed to the Regional Court. The appeal case was scheduled for January 2017. In connection with the trial, Máret Ánne Sara brought *Pile o'Sápmi* to the town of Tromsø, where the Regional Court is located. Other artists joined her with their works and performances at different venues in the town. Outside the court building, the transition continued. The skulls were prepared as they were in Harstad, albeit not piled up. Instead, they were organised in several vertical rows, each consisting of five skulls. Each row was suspended from a wooden frame mounted inside a plexiglass cube. The cube rested upon a low plinth of the brown, packed canvas (Figure 3). Both the artworks and the trial attracted considerable media attention. Jovsset Ánde won his case again; the verdict stated that the government violated his rights as protected by international conventions on human rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Norwegian government appealed to the Supreme Court against the verdict (*Pile O'Sápmi*, 2018). In Tromsø, the connection between the art project and the legal case was strong. The events attracted great attention to the legal case while the art object itself was not subjected to any specific critique.



Figure 2. *Pile o'Sápmi—Shouts from the Shit Flood* (2016) in Harstad. 150 reindeer skulls, plastic and tape, 200 x 150 x 150 cm (photo: Máret Ánne Sara). ©Máret Ánne Sara/BONO 2019.



Figure 3. *Pile o'Sápmi* (2017) in Tromsø. 35 reindeer skulls in plexiglass (photo: Matti Aikio). ©Máret Ánne Sara/BONO 2019.

The *Pile o'Sápmi* Project at Documenta

After a presentation of the project for the curatorial team of *Documenta 14* in Karasjok in August 2016, Máret Ánne Sara was invited to participate in the show. This show is one of the biggest, most prestigious and perhaps controversial art exhibitions worldwide. A few artists from Norway have previously been invited but hardly any Sámi artists. For the 2017 exhibition, Sara was one of seven Sámi artists who received an invitation to participate in the show. By travelling to the site of Documenta in Kassel in Germany from its site-specific as well as conceptual origins and close connection to the legal case, *Pile o'Sápmi* took a giant leap into the international art world and new political connections in this context. In a TV interview, Sara described her experience of the new context as a change from the local focus connecting *Pile o'Sápmi* to her brother's legal case to a focus on international connections and other struggles concerning discrimination in our 'democratic' world (NRK Oddasat TV, 2017); this means that the activist character of the work as an event was no longer as strong. To shed light on the new connections, a brief retrospective glance at Documenta seems necessary.

Documenta has taken place every five years in Kassel since 1955. Organised by the Kassel painter and academy professor Arnold Bode, the motivation for the first exhibition was to bring Germany back into dialogue with the rest of the world after the end of the Second World War (WWII) and connect the international art scene through a presentation of the 20th-century art. The first exhibition was a great success, leading Bode to initiate a new exhibition in 1959, thus establishing the exhibition cycle of Documenta. According to its website, '... documenta increasingly became a seismograph of developments in contemporary art' (About-documenta, 2018).

Since its foundation, the show has received massive critiques and undergone a series of modifications at both the curatorial and organisational level, adjusting to the broader global developments. The art on display and the different discursive platforms created by the curators have always aimed at goals outside the art itself. In the 1950s, it sought to have a healing or reconciling effect upon post-WWII trauma. Since then, Europe has for many years been the central reference, and a Eurocentric perspective on art has been dominating. At the turn of the century, the postcolonial perspective was in focus, questioning the Eurocentric perspective and the relationship between the colonial and postcolonial eras, aiming at the globalisation of the art world (Szymczyk, 2017). In other words, there is always a political agenda at Documenta.

A paradigmatic shift came about with *Documenta 11* in 2002, led by curator Okwui Enwezor. In response to previous critiques that the Eurocentric perspective had resulted in glaring marginalisation of large constituencies of non-Western artists, he for the first time invited a large group of non-Western artists to take part in the show. The exhibition represented an attempt to reorder the unequal relationship between the West and the rest of the world (Ogbechie, 2005). In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, Enwezor made his perspective clear claiming that rather than vast distances between strange people and cultures, postcoloniality embodies the mediation of nearness as the dominant mode of understanding the present condition of globalisation (Enwezor, 2002)

Adam Szymczyk was appointed the artistic director of *Documenta 14*. He proposed to unfold the exhibition in two partly overlapping stages in Athens and Kassel. When Szymczyk started his work in 2013, Europe was facing severe economic crises, affecting Greece in particular. To resolve the crisis, Greece was offered huge state loans from Germany, which plunged Greece into massive debt. 'Learn from Athens' was one of the statements that Szymczyk delivered, pointing to the economic crisis, as well as to the massive protests that took place against the Greek government.

He also offered a dystopic view of the future of the Western civilisation. He claimed that the unstoppable conquest of territory and desire for the dissemination of 'our' way of being would lead us to a point where there would be nowhere to go. Hence, '... the world has become known and ends here' (Szymczyk, 2017, p. 33). However, by bringing indigenous practices and techniques of knowledge from all over the world via Athens to Kassel and elsewhere, he and his team were aiming to question the '... supremacist, white and male, nationalist, colonialist way of being and thinking that continues to construct and dominate the world order' (Szymczyk, 2017, p. 30).

Whether the curator managed to achieve his goal depended on art critics' critical investigations. One critic characterised the overall curatorial platform as a total failure and a new climax of political art crisis (Arend, 2017). Another claimed that *Documenta 14*'s deep longing for moral correctness was its greatest weakness and cited Máret Anne Sara's curtain of threaded skulls as a sad example of how quickly an art-transmitted protest about political and social causes can become veritable kitsch (Erhard, 2017).

The Connections at Neue Neue Galerie



Figure 4. *Pile o'Sápmi* (2017), Neue Neue Galerie in Kassel. 400 reindeer skulls and metal wire. About 300 x 400 cm (photo: Hanna Horsberg Hansen). ©Máret Anne Sara/BONO 2019.



Figure 5. *Pile o'Sápmi – Power Necklace* (2017) Neue Neue Galerie in Kassel. Two hundred miniature reindeer skulls cast of porcelain from reindeer-bone ash; each 5 x 25, 5 x 2 cm of silk threads and white reindeer leather (photo: Hanna Horsberg Hansen). ©Máret Ánne Sara/BONO 2019.

For *Documenta 14*, Sara developed *Pile o'Sápmi* from the version she had on display in Tromsø. She collected 400 heads from the slaughterhouse in Guovdageaidnu and prepared them in the same way as earlier. Then she drilled a small hole at the back of the skulls and 'sewed' them together with a thin metal wire from the nose to the back of the skull. Each row consisted of eleven heads. The rows were suspended vertically, side by side in the shape of a curtain, measuring three meters high and four meters wide (Figure 4). The colour of the skulls differed slightly. Each row was monochrome, and the contrast in colour between the rows created vertical stripes resembling the stripes in the Sámi flag.

As part of the *Pile o'Sápmi* project, there was also an English translation of the Norwegian Reindeer Husbandry Act; this is a disputed legal document that legalises the Norwegian government's right to reduce Jovsset Ánde's reindeer herd. Together with the legal texts, there were excerpts from the trials of Jovsset Ánde Sara versus the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Printed on white A4 sheets and placed side by side inside a long well-lit vitrine, the texts offered the audience information about the legal case while creating a context for the curtain.

Pile o'Sápmi was on display in Neue Neue Galerie, an exhibition space in a former loading area of the old Kassel post-depot. The curtain of skulls was close to the entrance in a large open space. The former loading area had many smaller cells surrounding the entrance space. In one such cell, Sara presented a new part of the project comprising two lightbox images and a three-dimensional object named *Pile o'Sápmi – Power Necklace* (Figure 5). In one lightbox, there was a photograph from 2016,



Figure 6. A Pile of buffalo bones from mid 1870. Image source: Wikimedia commons.

depicting *Pile o'Sápmi* from the first exhibition in Tana (Figure 1). The photo has visual similarities with *The Apotheosis of War*, a painting from 1871 by the Russian painter Vasily Vasilyevich Vereshchagin (1835–1901). This painting shows a pile of human skulls set on barren earth in the aftermath of a battle or siege. On the work's frame, Vereshchagin inscribed his dedication of the painting 'to all great conquerors, past, present and to come.' The pacifist and humanitarian movement of the time used this painting, which demonstrated the cruelty of war, to protest against the war (Ray, 2014). A political connection may exist between the two pictures as well as the visual resemblance in how they both connect art to a political protest.

In the other lightbox, there was a sepia photograph of a high trophy pile of buffalo bones (Figure 6). The photograph was from Regina, the capital of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, and was taken in connection to a historical event that took place there in the 1800s. Before 1882, the place was known as Pile of Bones, the English translation of the Cree name of the place *oskana kâ-asastêki* ('bones that are piled'). The indige-

nous peoples in North America relied heavily on the buffalo for their survival. They utilised the whole animal and piled up the bones in the belief that they would connect the dead animals to the site, assuring the buffaloes would return to the same location (Everett-Heath, 2014). A great culling of buffaloes took place as the colonisers built the Canadian Pacific Railway across western Canada. Military commanders permitted their troops to kill buffaloes while being cognizant that they were doing their part to resolve the so-called 'Indian problem'. To kill the 'savages' source of food and clothing was easier than to kill the 'savages' themselves, an American lieutenant declared (Smiths, 1994). The hunters also piled up bones, as we can see in the photograph. The inclusion of this picture as part of *Pile o'Sápmi* draws a historical connection between the widely known atrocities committed against First Nation Americans and the fight that Sara and her family face today; it also explains the name of the project.

Power Necklace is composed of approximately 200 miniature reindeer skulls, cast of reindeer bone porcelain. White silk threads link the small, white porcelain objects together in vertical rows similar to the skulls in the curtain. The rows are suspended from a collar made of white reindeer leather. The collar would cover the shoulders of the wearer, and the long rows would cover the chest. This object has a reference to the picture of the buffalo skulls through the porcelain, as the colonisers exported crushed buffalo bones to England to produce fine bone china (García-Antón, 2017). The design of the necklace and the label of *power* also serve to elaborate neckpieces adorned with crests and heraldic symbols carried by Norwegian majors on official missions. By covering their shoulders and chest, the neckpieces demonstrate their power, difference and distance between 'them' and 'us'. Collectively, the lightboxes and *Power Necklace* have an almost didactic character, drawing historical connections to the culling of buffaloes in Canada, thus situating *Pile o'Sápmi* politically within an international, indigenous discourse about extinction and marginalisation.

Considering that the smaller works in the cell contextualise the grand curtain and connect it to international indigenous discourse, the curtain itself may be understood as a strong statement connected to contemporary Sámi struggles and the legal case. The ethnic political movement in the 1970s and 1980s focused firmly on the Sámi rights, language and self-governance. One result of the political struggle was the Sámi Act, passed by the Norwegian Parliament in 1987. The Act concerned Sámediggi (the Sámi parliament), and other legal matters. The purpose of the Act was to enable the Sámi people in Norway to safeguard and develop their language, culture and way of life (The Sámi Act, 2007).

Máret Ánne Sara belongs to the generation who grew up during the enforcement of this law. During her childhood in Guovdageaidnu, the language at home and school was Sámi. The traditional Sámi dress, the *gákti*, was the only proper outfit at any celebration. Other Sámi symbols were carried with pride at any occasion. Concerning language, and to a certain extent culture, the situation today stands according to what the law intended, in that the Sámi people have been both safeguarded and developed in language and culture, at least in the northern areas of Sápmi. What is at stake today is the third and last point in the law: the Sámi way of life. Sara has composed the curtain

in a way that resembles the stripes in the Sámi flag. Seen as the flag, the curtain only resembles a part of it, as if it is torn, leaving only a little piece left. This in turn may point to the rest or shreds from the Sámi Act that is left; the language and parts of culture. The way of life is torn away.

As buffaloes were core to American indigenous people, reindeer husbandry is the same for many Sámi people as Sara's family. The obligatory culling of Jovsset Ánde Sara's herd will lead to a loss of both the animals and the way of life, connected to reindeer husbandry (Pile O'Sápmi, 2018). The skulls, however, have one prominent and important common feature: the bullet holes in the foreheads. This feature bears testimony to how the animals were put to death by a pistol. Today, this is the only legal way to kill the reindeers, as decided by the Norwegian agriculture experts. The traditional way involved using a knife, cutting the throttling and letting the animal bleed. The blood was collected and carefully stirred and used to make food. Not only the blood but all parts of the animal were collected and used for cooking or clothing. As was the case with the buffaloes, only the bones were left, which the Sámi traditionally covered by stone. This slaughtering method is no longer allowed, despite being an essential part of the Sámi culture. In many ways, the curtain argues for the loss of culture and pride of the same culture. In a context of art-historical iconography, the skulls could be a sign of a *memento mori*—a reminder of death. The repetition of the skull four hundred times renders such a reminder extremely powerful.

As the smaller, didactic works in the cell illustrate, *Pile o'Sápmi* connects to an international indigenous discourse and her brother's case. However, another connection is also at play here at the grand, international art exhibition—the struggle over power in the art world and the curator's political agenda, a connection that is overlooked by the critic labelling the curtain as veritable kitsch.

The International, Political Connections

At Neue Neue Gallerie, four other large works, in particular, were in the hall that provided *Pile o'Sápmi* with a new context: the works by Rasheed Araeen, Gordon Hookey, Theo Eshetu and Beatriz González.

Rasheed Araeen is one of the pivotal figures who used his activities as a publisher, writer and artist in England to establish a postcolonial critique of the art world, including Documenta. Through the publication *Third Text*, he has criticised the exclusiveness of the Western art world or the white supremacy, as Szymczyk formulated it. In the light of the postcolonial critique of the Western art world in the 1990s, Araeen claimed that the exclusion of the artists belonging to the others within the history of modernism, such as the Sámi artists, was logical in the very idea of exclusive European modernity. This modernity was rooted in the conception of the difference between the European Self and the colonised Other (Araeen, 2000). Rasheed's work at *Documenta 14* is called *The Reading Room* (2016/2017) and comprises modifications and alterations of several of his previous works (Buddensieg, 2013). The work is an assem-

blage of tables and stools shaped like cubes. Copies of the journal *Third Text* cover the table tops. On a freestanding wall, partitioning the open area into two parts, a series of Araeen's paintings of geometric patterns can also be seen. The furniture-cubes are painted in different colours, which is repeated in the paintings on the wall. The cubes and paintings represent an obvious aestheticisation of Araeen's insistence on a place in Western modernism, through his use of minimalism's cubes and op art's geometric patterns in the paintings.

The Reading Room (2016/2017) is in front of Sara's curtain, connecting the two works, both visually and politically; politically because you have to pass through the reading room comprising the critical texts about Eurocentrism and exclusiveness in the Western art world before reaching Sara's political protest. This critique has played a pivotal role in paving the way for non-Western art to participate at Documenta.

Gordon Hookey belongs to the Waanyi people of Australia and is another indigenous artist who was invited to *Documenta 14*. Hookey paints large-scale history paintings in the form of murals and canvases. The paintings often include a text where he bends and shapes English words, changing their meaning and appropriating a language that is not his own, seen from an indigenous perspective and yet the only language that he can speak. On the same wall as Araeen's pictures, Hookey visualises the colonial genesis of Australia—the 'exploration' of land, settlement and erasure of indigenous cultures (Folkers, 2017). He presented the history on a large canvas, measuring two metres high and ten metres wide, named *Murriland*. The words 'MURRIALITY, VICTORIOUS, ABORIGNIALLEYESATION, TRIUMPHANT' are written like a headline on the wall above the painting as an example of how he plays with language and words in a paradoxical and subversive way while relating history from his perspective. Where the canvas ends, the painting continues as a wall painting. By borrowing a painterly style from street art, the painting situates history as an ongoing process.

On the other side of the wall from where Araeen's and Hookey's works were on display, Theo Eshetu's video work *Atlas Fractured* was projected onto a large banner, stretching along the whole wall from the floor to the ceiling. The banner is the same one that covered the entrance to the ethnological museum in Berlin. Eshetu came across it as it was about to be removed from the museum (Szewczyk, 2017). Originally, the banner had a text of five words naming the five 'corners' of the world as constructed by the European colonisers (Europe, America, Oceania, Asia and Africa). A mask illustrated each of the 'corners'. When it was removed, the banner fractured. In Eshetu's remounting, the fractures are made visible as the letters in the five words are displaced, constructing new words as 'AMERIKEN', 'EUA', and 'OZE'. On the masks on the original banner, Eshetu projected images and films of faces, busts and paintings, ending up obliterating any distinctions between the regions, masks and projections.

Naming the work *Atlas Fractured* can be understood as a comment on how the imperialist order in the world, as imposed by European colonisers, is now slowly fracturing. To draw the atlases of the world, both naming and claiming through visualisations were for the colonisers a means of worlding the world—aiming to tell the truth from a specific vantage point (i.e. their own). In the work, we see how these fracturing

power structures and their visualisations lack validity. Instead of the five ‘corners,’ we see a multitude of faces in a polyphonic yet unison message of tolerance and transnationalism, encouraging dialogues between identities.

Parallel to Sara’s curtain is another curtain, stretching from the floor to the ceiling. This curtain measuring seven meters high and twelve meters wide is Beatriz González’s painting on canvas from 1978 *Telón de la móvil y cambiante naturaleza* (‘Drop curtain of mobile and changing nature’). The painting is an appropriation rather than a replica of Édouard Manet’s (1832–1883) *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe* (‘The Luncheon on the Grass’), created between 1862 and 1863. Manet’s painting depicts a female nude and a scantily dressed female bather on a picnic with two fully dressed men in a rural setting.

The appropriation has no intention of copying the original ‘masterpiece’ as she has removed the scantily dressed, bathing woman in the background of Manet’s painting and divided the canvas vertically into two parts. In the vertical division, a small gap appears, making it possible to see through and beyond the canvas when standing in front of it. Instead of the woman in the background, as in Manet’s painting, we see our fellow spectators walking around looking at art. This way of looking has been part of feministic art discourse, criticising the relationship between the male gaze and the object character of the female body in cinema and art (Mulvey, 1975). In this case, the gap may also make us look at ourselves—the art audience in general. What do you see when you look at the art of the Other? Is the white supremacy being questioned here?

To place these four artists together is not incidental but a curatorial grip. The origin of the five artists in the big entrance hall at Neue Neue Galerie mirrors the old, imperialistic world order as in Eshetu’s video work—Sara from Europe, Araeen from Asia, Hookey from Australia, González from (South) America and Eshetu with African ancestors. In the exhibition, the artist’s origin do not seem to be important because they are all critical of the existing power relations in the world. They share no style, no medium and no origin; however, alongside other works at the same venue (e.g. Joar Nango’s *European Everything*, Ahlam Shibidi’s *Heimat* (‘Homeland’) and *Die Gesellschaft der Freund__ innen von Halit* (‘The society of Friends of Halit’), they share the same will to tell their stories or those of others about what it looks like to live in the world today. It is almost as if their works verify Enwezor’s claim from 2002 about the closeness rather than remoteness among people today. Regardless of origin or nationality, the four artists are designing or aestheticising a political performance in four very different ways, albeit still in connection with one another.

As Guovdageaidnu is in the middle of Sápmi, *Pile o’Sápmi* appears to be in the middle of the world as an international artwork in a globalised art world. However, in this context, the work is gliding conceptually from the original character of art activism to what Groys characterises as the politicisation of aesthetics. He explains this as the use of aesthetics for political design (Groys, 2016). In Documenta, the curators design the political, the success of which, as noted above, has been disputed. However, the curatorial grip in Neue Neue Galerie appears to fulfil the curator’s aim to learn from indigenous people.

Oslo 2017: The Divergence

Pile o'Sápmi received considerable attention at Documenta, and glossy magazines listed the work as a highlight (Roessler, 2017) (dpa, 2017) while in Norway, the legal case involving Jovsset Ánde Sara was still running. The appeal case was scheduled for the Supreme Court in December 2017 in Oslo. Again, Máret Ánne Sara brought her project to the site of the trial. Together with other artists and friends, she opposed the Norwegian government and legal authorities. In front of the Norwegian parliament building in Oslo, she displayed the curtain from Kassel as a backdrop for speeches, performances and conversations, labelling the work *Pile o'Sápmi Supreme*. In Gallery Tenthaus, she organised an exhibition together with other artists. The character of art activism was present again.

The artwork gained national and international recognition while Jovsset Ánde Sara lost the case for the first time. The Norwegian Supreme Court favoured the government's political arguments, disregarding the previous verdicts (*Pile O'Sápmi*, 2018). The case sets a hugely important precedent for the indigenous rights in Norway and particularly reindeer herders. While this was the result of the legal case, the curtain met a very different situation. The artwork became the state property when the Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design seized it; this means that an artwork called *Pile o'Sápmi* in the future will be included in a Norwegian canon of art, admired for its aesthetic qualities and provenance.

As mentioned earlier, Groys claims that art activism initially enters the flow of time or initiates a journey. He also claims that when an artwork is included in a permanent collection, it is taken out of the flow and instead preserved, secured and protected (Groys, 2016). His claim refers to Walter Benjamin's thoughts about an artwork's aura and the loss of it when '... it is lacking one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (Benjamin, 2006, p. 116).

Through several transitions in different contexts and in the flow of time, *Pile o'Sápmi* has connected to politics in different ways: as art activism connected to Jovsset Ánde Sara's legal case defending the Sámi culture and way of life, as a medium fulfilling the curator's aims and political agenda at Documenta and finally as part of the Norwegian canon.

The transition of *Pile o'Sápmi* can also be understood as a loss and transition from the dead animal—still bleeding in Tana—to the skinned, dried skulls preserved in the museum collection, stripped of its aura and separated from its original purpose, space and time. Hopefully, the work can prove Groys and Benjamin wrong. As part of a permanent exhibition, the size and potential 'aura' of the curtain of skulls may be perceived as a strong representation of the Norwegian colonial history as well as the Sámi resistance.

Pile o'Sápmi is, however, a project beyond a mere artwork. Websites, events, actions and probably new artworks will continue to flow. The legal case will be taken to the European Court of Human Rights. If the artwork is out of the flow, the legal and political case is not, although the two have diverged. The political connections will continue to change—the flow will continue.

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BIO

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