

The Sámi Museum in Karasjok: A story of resistance

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In Karasjok, at the Norwegian side of Sápmi, there is a cultural historical museum, Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/The Sámi Museum (SVD), and there is an art collection comprising 1400 works of art. The cultural historical museum building was completed 1972. Different ideas about an art museum in connection to the SVD building have existed since the 1980's, but for various reasons, no plans for an art museum are yet fulfilled after many years of deliberations.

For the Sámi to establish cultural institutions, as a museum, was a way of claiming the position as a subject, rather than as a victim of the asymmetric relation and difference between the majority and themselves as an indigenous minority. There are parallel histories about indigenous peoples establishing their own museums and art museums in other parts of the world. These stories are often framed as stories of decolonisation, and as an affirmation of how history can empower indigenous people (Child 2009: 251). At the heart of these stories, there is a multiplicity of voices and variety of narratives of the use of museums as tools of revitalisation and decolonisation for indigenous people (Sleeper-Smith 2009: 4). The American, indigenous scholar Amy Lonetree claims that to support indigenous communities in their efforts towards decolonisation, it is crucial to privilege indigenous voices and perspectives, to challenge stereotypical representations, and to serve as educational forums in their own communities and the public (Lonetree 2012: 160).

The following story about the SVD and a Sámi art museum, will tell a very similar story as Lonetree refers to about the museum as tool of revitalisation and decolonisation, resistance against stereotypes, about empowerment through history, education and scholarship, the role of the elders and the struggle to find one owns voices. However, in the context of this book, this essay will not frame the story as a story about decolonisation, but rather explore how SVD and the attempts to establish a Sámi art museum could be understood as a neo-avant garde practice in Hal Foster's understanding. Foster claims that the neo-avant garde in the 1960's moved away from grand oppositions of the institution of art, as was characteristic for the avant-garde in early 20th century, of to subtle displacements and deconstruction of the same institution (Foster 1996: 25). Decolonisation processes are often focused upon critique of existing museums and colonisation in itself (See: Lonetree 2009). In Karasjok, there was no museum or art institution to oppose or decolonise. Rather, as will be argued; during the first years, the Sámi Museum operated as a

site for political resistance, rather than historical storytelling. It might seem paradoxical to link deconstruction of the art institution to a cultural historical museum, or to a museum at all, but the story of a Sámi art museum is embedded in the story of SVD. This interconnection of two, usually separated institutions exceeds the Western museum concept, and is indeed a deconstruction.

I base the exploration on available documents and reports, as well as personal communication with people who at different times, in different roles and ways have been involved in SVD or in the many deliberations about an art museum. Without their generosity and patience, this work would have been almost impossible. I am very grateful for all assistance, scepticism, advises and stories each and one of them have contributed with to my work.¹

Samiid Vuorká Davvirat/The Sámi Museum (SVD)

As for many other museums and art collections, it all started with private collections. A museum association was founded in 1939 aiming for establishing a Sámi museum in Karasjok. Objects as well as funding were collected among individuals (Johnsen 2014: 4). However, all objects collected as well as the protocols were lost during WW2 because of the German scorched-earth retreat destroying everything throughout Finnmark, the northernmost county, in the winter of 1944-1945. After the war, the Norwegian Labour Party government, aiming to rebuild the country as a new welfare state, tried their best to stop the Sámi from resuming some of their old ways of living including to re-inhabit some of their old territory. Furthermore, the government enforced strict, discriminatory laws in the field of education that might have succeeded in obliterating Sámi language and culture, if it was not for the local resistance (See: Bjørklund 2000).

The museum association in Karasjok was one example of such resistance. Those engaged in the association continued their work after the war, realising the increased norwegianisation in the post-war period would cause a gradual loss of the typical Sámi culture (Johnsen 2014: 6). They presented plans for a museum for different public authorities. Finally, the municipality of Karasjok granted the association land to build a museum close to the community centre, and in 1972, the building was completed. The architects were Magda Eide Jessen and Vidar Corn Jessen. They collaborated with the late Sámi artist Iver Jåks (1932-2007), who designed permanent decorations both inside and outside the modernist-style building (Haugdal 2018: 810). Jåks' use of materials and iconography was deeply rooted in Sámi mythology and aesthetic practices, while his style, as well as the designs of interior and furniture was contemporary and modernist.

The first years

SVD was the first publicly funded building erected to house a Sámi cultural institution. Alf Isak Keskitalo, a pioneering Sámi philosopher, was employed as the first head of the museum. Jon Ole Andersen, a pioneering *duojár* (person who makes *duodji*)² accompanied Keskitalo as museum technician. He was later to play a pivotal role in constructing the permanent museum designs together with Iver Jåks. The small staff also included the housekeeper Anne Marie Skoglund (Sára 2014: 24).

The beginning of the 1970's was a period of growing ethno-political movements among the Sámi people as well as among indigenous people internationally, and resistance against the Norwegian assimilation politics was increasing (Bjørklund 2000: 26). The SVD building came to play an important role as a physical site in this movement (Johnsen 2014: 18).

As there was no permanent exhibition at the time of the inauguration, the house was used for other purposes. The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation's Sámi department, Sámi Radio, rented space in the building together with Karasjok's association for reindeer herders, and the local branch of the Norwegian Sámi Association. Tromsø Museum had a field station there, where its scholars could stay during field trips to the area. There was a collection of books available, long before a Sámi library existed. From the beginning, the museum was also an important institution concerning training of Sámi scholars.

In the first three months of 1973, sixty tree different events took place in the building. There were political meetings, social gatherings as well as private celebrations. Occasionally, the activity exceeded the building's space capacity, as well as its service and staff resources. Nevertheless, the impression was, according to Keskitalo's annual report, that this activity was of great importance to the museum's function in society, hence there was no need to decrease the level of activity (Keskitalo 1973).

A living cultural institution

In 1975, Mari Teigmo³ followed Keskitalo as head of the museum. She continued to use the building as Keskitalo had done, claiming that the functions of the building extended far beyond the original purpose, which was to host a cultural-historical exhibition. Instead, the building was about to become a living cultural institution dealing with Sámi politics of culture. As there was still no permanent cultural historical exhibition, acquisitions of art was a priority, though this was not what a cultural historical museum was supposed to do. In 1974, SVD acquired works by several Sámi artists; Ellen Kitok Andersen, Iver Jåks, Klemet A. Veimæl as well as Nils Turi for the collection. The annual travelling exhibition of

North-Norwegian art was at display in the building, as was an exhibition by the Sámi artist Hans Ragnar Mathisen.⁴

Teigmo wanted to further extend the activities in the house and made plans for cultural historical classes to educate Sámi people in their own history of culture, arguing that this topic had never been thought in schools (Teigmo 1975). She also emphasised the need for the museum to be able to play both a role as a Sámi cultural institution for the Sámi people as well as to mediate information about Sámi issues to the rest of the world (Teigmo 1977). Teigmo underlined the need for the museum to take an active part in the contemporary community in Karasjok itself; far from urban centres, but in the core of Sápmi (Teigmo 1976: 81).

The activity and energy in the building these first years, may be of importance to what happened to the planned art museum later. The house became a second home for the local Sámi population, and a site where people in Karasjok, as well people visiting from other places, went to be educated in their own culture, to celebrate, to attend meetings, to go to work and to discuss politics. The museum was alive, indeed, and all who experienced this time, share a collective memory of how Sámi politics then changed the society thanks to the activities in the house (Sára 2014: 31). Formally, there was a director; however, it would be more to the point describing SVD as community-based, as an early example of how museums in indigenous societies replaced a focus on objects with social subjects and concerns (Harrison 2005: 43). These concerns coincides indeed with the neo-avant-garde who turned their focus upon art institutions as sites for social practice (Foster 1996: 5).

SVD acquired art every year for the museum collection, as art was considered very important to the Sámi population; consequently, a need for a permanent place for the art collection grew. The director feared outsiders might acquire relevant works of art and make them inaccessible to the Sámi people themselves, if suitable depots and exhibitions spaces did not exist (Teigmo 1978).

Parallel in time to the ongoing creation of the Sámi Museum, a strong political movement evolved protesting against a gigantic hydroelectric plant project in the Alta-Kautokeino river system in the core of the Sámi area. The demonstrations took place from the early 1970's until 1981. Together with a Sámi cultural revitalisation, the protests led to a change in the Norwegian constitution, and a Sámi act securing Sámi people the right to maintain and practice their own cultural traditions and language (Government.no). Lastly, in 1989, Sámediggi (the Sámi parliament) was established and located in Karasjok. The fight against the gigantic dam project was lost, but the protests led to a big change in the relation between the Norwegian majority and the indigenous people (Stordahl 1996: 92). According to the first president of Sámediggi, Ole Henrik

Magga, SVD played an important role in this process, as SVD was the first site where Sámi people did not need to “bow and scrape”. Thus, it became extremely important in furthering Sámi rights (Snarby 2017: 122).

A Sámi way of exhibiting

In 1982, a permanent cultural historical exhibition was completed. The idea behind the exhibition was to promote a Sámi way of exhibiting. What this Sámi way might be was a recurring question. As far as exhibition design was concerned, the Sámi way of designing was probably taken for granted since Iver Jåks was the designer and Jon Ole Andersen was the *duojár*. In an interview from 1998, Jåks talks about how he and Andersen collected old, sundried pinewood in the vicinity of Karasjok for the exhibitions cases (Kvist 1998: 55). This pinewood made the backdrop of the cases, mounted together with treenails. In the same interview, Jåks describes how his background was highly influential concerning his approach to the wood. “I shape the wood by splitting it, without any use of machines. This was how my father did it [...] The wood will remain strong when treated this way” (Kvist 1998: 56).

The discussions also touched upon the relation between tradition and modernity in Sámi art and culture. One result of the discussions was that objects classified as *duodji* was at display in a separate section of the cultural historical exhibition, while the growing art collection which was not considered as *duodji*, was archived in the basement. According to Sámi social anthropologist Vigdis Stordahl, this dichotomy between tradition and modernity was typical for the first years of the Sámi ethno political movement in the 1970s (Stordahl 1996: 97). The “traditional” art, labelled *duodji*, was considered to be authentic, Sámi, and connected to a specific and heroic past. Art that was not considered as *duodji*, but *dáidda*, was considered to be non-Sámi, hence more in line with a failed present as in Western or Nordic art. The concept *dáidda* was used about art media as painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and graphic art.

This structuring of two different concepts of art was indeed a construction on loan from Western academic discourses of primitivism and understandings of the privileged West as developer of modernity as well as modernist and contemporary art (Phillips 1994: 39) (Clifford 1988: 198). To exhibit in a Sámi way seems in this context to imply exclusion of what was not considered as “traditional”. This perception of the difference between *duodji* and *dáidda*, did however change during the years to come, and as the discussions evolved.

During the 1980s, the ideas about the art collection and the purpose of it changed. The annual report from 1984 states that an art collection, if

exhibited, would enable SVD to produce exhibitions demonstrating the development and diversity in Sámi art and crafts. These ideas opened up for a new understanding of Sámi art, exceeding, as well as resisting the mentioned dichotomy between *duodji* and *dáidda*. Canadian curator and art historian Diana Nemiroff writes about the same turn in North America. Nemiroff explains that while reading texts from the 1980s where First Nation artists told it their ways, she found that most fundamental for them, was the reclaim of change and diversity as integral aspects of Native traditions carried into the present (Nemiroff 1996: 429). As we see, the Sámi or indigenous way turned away from the focus upon “tradition” towards current developments and the diversity.

As a continuation of the discussions about a Sámi way, a debate evolved about how a Sámi museum differed from other museums. The conclusion of the discussion was that Sámi museums are culture institutions where Sámi language, values and social conventions are applied (Eira 1988). This conclusion is very much in line with what Sámi literary scholar Harald Gaski claims as important concerning Sámi cultural heritage. He points to the importance of memories transmitted orally – storytelling – in the construction of Sámi history and cultural heritage, rather than physical legacies (Gaski 1997: 11). The late Sámi artist Nils Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001) claims the same. He writes that art is a part of everyday life for the Sámi, as well as part of their philosophy, connected to and in connection to nature, without leaving any traces (Valkeapää 1979: 63). Gaski and Valkeapää both emphasise the immaterial, inner codes in the construction as well as transmission of Sámi cultural heritage.

The first plans for a Sámi “National Gallery”

The Sámi Artists’ Union (SDS) was well established in the end of the 1980’s, and they put pressure upon SVD to work for a Sámi art gallery.⁵ Though some works from the art collection participated in travelling exhibitions, most works were inaccessible and stored in the basement of SVD. The intention with the art collection at SVD was in fact the opposite; to make it accessible for the Sámi themselves, and with proper exhibition space. Pressure also came from the Sámi Union in Karasjok, who addressed the Arts Council Norway on the case. The local Sámi Union gave a group consisting of Arne Nystad, Iver Jáks and Mari Teigmo Eira the assignment to develop a pre-project for a Sámi art gallery, or as they put in brackets, a national gallery (Nystad 1990). The group collaborated with Blå Strek architects, based in Tromsø, represented by Knut Eirik Dahl and Nils Mjaaland, who together with the artist Aage Gaup and the medical doctor Knut Johnsen were already

involved in plans for a sculpture park and an indigenous art academy in Karasjok.

In a letter to Arts Council Norway, the group working for a Sámi art gallery described the conceptual frame for the museum/gallery as a site that should display a Sámi approach to landscape. A site, they claimed, where the encounter between history and new art could have the potential to create confrontation and thereby make a foundation for new understandings and insights. A close relation to and experience of nature inside the gallery should play a decisive role. The interior should provide the visitor with a flow of experiences where contrasts between exterior and interior would become an additional experience. Furthermore, they considered buildings to be of less importance than the landscape surrounding the building. A sketch of the planned building shows a low, star-shaped house, following the landscape as an extension of the existing SVD building (Nystad 1990).

The plan was never realised, but provides a glimpse of how the ideas around a Sámi art museum exceeded the constraints traditional art museums were subjected to at the time. The idea was neither to copy the Western, art historical museum concept structured as a linear history illustrated by a canon, nor the traditional art galleries' white cube. The plans rather have an avant-garde approach, blurring the difference between art and life, text and context, adding the Sámi way; the difference between culture and nature.

The committees

In 1992, the Sámi Artists' Union resumed the work for a Sámi art museum. At their initiative, a committee was appointed to work towards the establishment of a Sámi art museum. Per Bjarne Boym, head of Lillehammer Art Museum, was set to head the committee. The committee recommended building an art museum as an extension of the existing SVD building. The reason for this was the important relation between art and traditions. Thus, the art historical and cultural historical collections could mutually benefit from and enrich each other, the committee claimed (Boym 1995: 42).

The Boym committee also proposed to employ a professional manager of the art collection. Funded by Arts Council Norway, Morten Johan Svendsen entered the position 1998. At his initiative, a small part of the permanent exhibition area at SVD became a space for display of art from the collection. This arrangement succeeded, on a small scale, to demonstrate the important connection between the cultural historical collection and the art collection. Many years later, the art historians Sigrid Lien and Hilde Nilssen, visited the building and explored the exhibitions. They found that the art section inside the cultural historical

exhibition, left an impression of a museum space that opened up for articulations with the outer world, communicating with the international art scene, incorporating visions and perspectives from a global or multiple world (Lien 2011: 614). When I visited the building myself in February 2019, objects from SVD, belonging to the art collection, were at display in the cultural historical exhibition, next to historical objects. The connection between the cultural historical exhibition and the art collection goes both ways and is still very visible.

Collaborations and globalisation

In 2002, art historian Irene Snarby replaced Morten Johan Svendsen as head of the art department at SVD in a permanent position. This permanent position became of great importance to the art collection. Exhibitions were curated and displayed both at SVD and as touring exhibitions. International connections to the emerging, global indigenous art world as well as to local and regional partners in the field were established.

The international connections and collaborations between Sámi artists and other indigenous artists goes back to the mid 1980's and the touring exhibition *Arts from the Arctic*. In this exhibition, indigenous artists from the Arctic region collaborated for the first time. They presented the best of their art under the motto "For and with the indigenous peoples of the Arctic" (Utsi 1993: 9). Indigenous artists from Alaska, Canada, Russia, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and Sápmi participated and collaborated. The project lasted from 1984 until 1995 and the collaboration made a breakthrough, allowing many artists to become more aware of the value of their own art, as well as providing a basis for further collaborations between indigenous artists and their institutions (Snarby 2013: 69). SVD acquired all the works from this exhibition for the collection.

In 2003, seven Sámi artists participated in the exhibition *Maya, Sámi, Barí, Wayuu, Yukpa, Añu, Arte Contemporáneo* at Centro de Arte de Maracaibo Lía Bermúdez in Venezuela together with eight indigenous artists from Venezuela and Guatemala. This was a collaboration between SVD and the art centre in Maracaibo emphasising the indigenous contemporary art, expressing visions and understanding of today's world (Bermúdez 2004: 2). The exhibition was also at display at Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas, the national museum of art in Venezuela.

An exhibition of Sámi and Inuit art, *In the Shadow of the Midnight sun: Sámi and Inuit Art 2000-2005*, toured Canada in a collaboration between SVD and Art Gallery of Hamilton, ending up at the National Gallery in Ottawa 2008. This collaboration continued, expanded and finally resulted in *Sakahàn* 2013, a big exhibition of art by indigenous artists from (almost) all over the world. SVD and Irene Snarby

participated as co-curators together with other indigenous curators and the National Gallery of Canada. *Sakahàn* brought together vastly different, co-existing art worlds that had been separated and marginalised in the larger realm of contemporary art (Lalonde 2013: 18). To display indigenous art at this scale and level contributed, merely by its existence, to the ongoing critique of the global art world's exclusion of indigenous art. A critique, which in turn, paved the way for a significant group of indigenous artists, including seven Sámi artists⁶ at *Documenta 14* in 2017, with an aim to question the dominant way of being and thinking that continues to construct and dominate the world order (Szymczyk 2017: 30).

Unfortunately, none of the collaborative exhibitions were at display in Europe, and though contemporary Sámi art was better known and acknowledged in other parts of the world than in the Nordic countries ten years ago, this is about to change. Both Nordic capitals as well as big, international exhibitions has “discovered” Sámi art in the recent years, as did the neo-avant-garde in the 1980's, when they made a probe of ethnic as well as other differences as part of the ongoing critique of the institution of art (Foster 1996: 25).

The rise and fall of plans

Sámediggi took over the responsibility for the Sámi museums in 2002. SVD was at the same time organised as three departments; art, cultural history and conservation. The same year, Sámediggi gave SVD a grant and the assignment to continue planning of a new building for an art museum as an extension of the existing museum building (Nordvestsamisk 2007, 4). Parallel in time, a Norwegian museum reform was introduced. This reform had a great impact, on both the planning of the art museum, as well as upon the Sámi museums in general, and SVD in particular.

The Norwegian Ministry of Culture funded SVD the first years. For a period, the institution had the position as a Sámi national museum. This changed however, with the museum reform. One consequence was that no museums any longer should have the position as a national museum. The result of this decision was the establishment of a new organisation, Nordvestsamisk museumssiida, later RiddoDuottarMuseat (RDM), in 2006. This new museum consisted of SVD, Porsanger Museum (a local museum in the municipality of Porsanger), Kautokeino bygdetun, (a local museum in the municipality centre of Kautokeino), and Kokelv sjøsamiske museum, a seasámi museum in the municipality of Kvalsund (Johnsen 2011: 21).

When RDM was established 2006, an agreement concerning the relation between SVD and RDM was signed. RDM took over the

responsibility for building maintenance, the use of them, and the staff from SVD.⁷ The ownership of the building, as well as the cultural historical collections and a small part of the art collection, remained with SVD as the owners. SVD became a separate foundation elected by the founders, the museum association. The art department and most of the art collection disappeared from SVD, and became an art magazine organised as part of RDM.

The planning of an art museum went on until 2009. Then Sámediggi asked Statsbygg, the Norwegian government's key advisor in construction and property affairs as well as building commissioner, to conduct the preparations for building of an art museum as an extension of the existing SVD building. In the assignment, Statsbygg was asked to conduct the planning in close cooperation with RDM as well as the owners of the museum building, i. e. the SVD foundation, as agreed upon in 2006.

Statsbygg delivered its report and building program in December 2010. The report declared that the programming was conducted in cooperation with the employees at RDM during 2010. Based upon previous plans from 2007 made by SVD, as well as the plans from 1995, the report states that aim for an art museum is to make the Sámi heritage visible to the public, as well as to future generations. Furthermore, the report declares that the art museum shall operate in close connection with the Sámi society, stay accessible, open and open minded in an ongoing dialogue with the surrounding society. In a flexible and expressive way, the museum shall demonstrate the diversity and the best in Sámi as well as other indigenous art (Statsbygg 2010: 12).

In the introduction to the report, Statsbygg states that the existing SVD building needs renovation to be able to extend and connect to a new, planned building (Statsbygg 2010: 12). To renovate the SVD building, Statsbygg also wanted to take over ownership to it. Sámediggi subsequently sent a letter to the owners of the building, (the SVD foundation) asking for whether the board could accept such a solution (Svineng 2012).

The foundation replied that due to lack of funding from Sámediggi to develop further models for ownership of the building, they refused to give an answer (Henriksen 2012). Instead, they sent a letter to RDM terminating the agreement between SVD and RDM from 2006 (SVDfoundation 2012). A representative of Sámediggi replied to the SVD foundation and informed SVD that previous plans for co-location with a future art museum would be set aside. Sámediggi intended to discuss other solutions with the Ministry of Culture and Statsbygg than to include the premises of SVD (Larsen 2012). This new turn from

Sámediggi was not rooted in any new political decision, and was never realised.

An awkward situation had developed as the SVD foundation rejected to hand over the building to Statsbygg. Statsbygg's assignment was indisputable; to conduct the planning in cooperation with both the owners of the building (SVD) and RDM. Statsbygg did, however, not include SVD in the planning, only staff at RDM.

The Elders as gate watchers

The only supporters of the rejection, officially, was the local history and-museum association (NRKSápmi 2013). There were undoubtedly many reasons for the SVD rejection, but perhaps all the memories about the house played a role; the energy, the political discussions, the identity building that took place, as well as the importance of the house as a culture institution where Sámi language, values and social conventions were applied, and “the Sámi way” was evolved. One cannot outrun the possibility that Statsbygg was regarded as a representative of a colonial power and not welcome to be the owner of this heritage, without any negotiation, any understanding or recognition of the symbolic significance of the building as a site for resistance against the same power for more than forty years. All personal communication I have had with people involved in the process confirms to this impression as I received many memories transmitted to me as storytelling.

From being the first, and for a long time the most important house for the Sámi resistance, identity building and politics, the owners of SVD and the museum association had over the course of a few years experienced what they regarded as a robbery of status (as national Sámi museum) as a competent and professional museum (compared to the other museums in RDM), and the art collection (now a Sámi art magazine). They had no representation in the board in RDM, hence little influence on decisions made. To be ignored as the owners of this significant building was the last of a series of loss of statuses. To bluntly hand over the building, was out of the question. They would rather use it for their own purposes (NRKSápmi 2013).

This resistance against handing over the building to a representative of the colonial power might demonstrate how “The elders” in Sámi and other indigenous communities act as gate watchers to protect their own cultural heritage (See: Gaski 2019). Important here, is also how indigenous people construct heritage in their own contemporaneity (Greenop 2018: 547). In this case, the SVD foundation represented and protected the collective memory about the SVD building. Part of this memory includes the early years, and the political significance of the house

as a site of resistance, which in turn had become a part of Sámi cultural heritage.

The termination of the contract between SVD and RDM was never completed. Sámediggi initiated negotiations, and in 2013, an agreement was signed between SVD and RDM, granting SVD one seat in the board of RDM and securing future cooperation (Svineng 2013). In 2018, the SVD foundation accepted to hand over the building to Statsbygg. Planning of a Sámi art museum in connection to the SVD building was resumed in 2019.

Resistance and avant-garde

As mentioned earlier, the neo-avant-garde “discovered” ethnic differences almost simultaneously as the Sámi people through revitalisation and the ethno-political movement “discovered” themselves all over the world. From the beginning, this Sámi movement was a movement of resistance. Establishing the Sámi museum was an act of resistance towards Norwegian assimilation politics. To use the building as a site for speaking Sámi language, exchange of Sámi values and interaction, as well as a place for education of the Sámi people themselves, were all activities with the character of resistance.

The implicit critique of the white cube and the will to build something different, exceeding a traditional art museum as well as cultural historical museum coincides in many ways with Hal Foster’s characterisation of the neo-avant-garde’s movement away from oppositions to subtle displacements (Foster 1996: 25). SVD were seeking new ways to act as a museum as well as an art museum built upon a Sámi way of exhibiting, aiming to connect art, life, culture and nature.

The international connections and collaborations between indigenous artists, which was established in the early 1980’s, demonstrate the will to situate Sámi art and culture in a global art world, rather than as a local phenomenon out in some periphery. By transgressing national borders, and present art for and with indigenous peoples from (almost) all over the world, they also delivered a subversive critique of and resistance against the global art world’s exclusion of indigenous art and artists.

The critique and resistance went far beyond a critique of mere institutions, though the search for a Sámi way implicit a critique of the hegemonic Western or Nordic discourses. The strength and sustainability in the resistance became very visible in the rejection of handing over the SVD building to Statsbygg, demonstrating how resistance, and the memories about it, became a part of Sámi heritage. Hopefully, an art museum will be realised in the near future. If so, this will be a result of the resistance as well.

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Notes

¹ Anne May Olli, Gry Fors, Berit Åse Johnsen, Vigdis Stordahl, Hjalmar Strømeng, Anders Henriksen, Magne Svineng and other staff at Sámediggi and RDM.

² *Duodji* is the traditional Sámi art and aesthetic practice.

³ Later Mari Teigmo Eira

⁴ The first proper registrations of art in the collection did not happen until 1978, but art was collected since 1972 according to the annual reports (Teigmo 1975)

⁵ Sámi Dáiddacheppiid Searvi (SDS)/Sámi artists' Union was founded by Sámi artists in 1979 as part of the Sámi institution building that took place at the time (See: Hansen 2014).

⁶ The participating artist were Iver Jáks, Hans Ragnar Mathisen, Synnøve Persen, Brita Marakatt Labba, Joar Nango, Niilas Somby and Máret Anne Sara.

⁷ Driftsavtale mellom Stiftelsen NordvestSamisk museumssiida og Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De Samiske samlinger (Agreement upon operation between NordvestSamisk museumssiida and Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat) signed by chair Liv Østmo, NordvestSamisk museumssiida and chair Ragnhild L. Nystad, Sámiid Vuorká-Dávvirat/De Samiske samlinger in Karasjok 20.06.2007. NordvestSamisk

museumssiida was the first name of the new museum. Later, the name changed to RiddoDuottarMuseat, which is the name I apply not to cause too much confusion.