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In the Footsteps of the Stars— The Embroidered Worlds of Britta Marakatt-Labba



Kin Museum of Contemporary
Art in Giron/Kiruna



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As is evident in the works *Garjját* (The Crows), *Girdi noaiddit* (Flying Shamans), and *Historjá*, Britta Marakatt-Labba brings forth a rich and poetic narrative about the cultural and territorial struggles of the Sámi, mainland Europe's only indigenous people. The exhibition *In the Footsteps of the Stars: The Embroidered Worlds of Britta Marakatt-Labba* is to date the artist's largest retrospective in both Sápmi and Sweden. The exhibition—consisting of more than seventy works produced over the course of five decades—testifies to Marakatt-Labba's unique way of applying embroidery, applique, dyeing, and bare fabric to tell stories that interweave personal experience, regional specificities, and planetary urgencies.

Britta Marakatt-Labba, born in Ađevuopmi/Idivuoma and based today in Badje Sohppar/Övre Soppero (both in Giron/Kiruna Municipality on the Swedish side of Sápmi), has for over half a century been one of most prominent Sámi artists. In her artworks she depicts daily activities and political episodes, historical events, and mythological scenes. Present in her work is the reoccurring figure of the primeval mother wearing a red horn cap, or *ladjogaphir*, common in the areas of the north and east Sámi until it was banned by the church in the nineteenth century. On some occasions Marakatt-Labba instead relates her stories through prints, sculptures, as well as installations. Utilizing a signature of Sámi *joik* singing, the narratives usually lack a beginning and an end. Panoramic landscapes with white mountain plateaus often serve as the backdrop to the detailed scenes that she typically depicts in the foreground. In an early interview, she emphasized that textiles are themselves something that the nomadic and reindeer herding Sámi brought with them during their annual migrations,

textiles that even to this day remain easy to pack up and carry. Moreover, her textiles come from nature—that is truly their origin.

The acclaimed work *Historjá* (2004–2007), which measures twenty-four meters, will be on view in the atrium of Giron's new city hall, inside which Kin Museum of Contemporary Art is located. Originally commissioned for the UiT: The Arctic University of Norway in Romsa/Tromsö University, the epic embroidery garnered a great deal of attention in connection with the Documenta 14 exhibition in Kassel, 2017. Interest in her art has not abated since, evidenced by invitations from established venues such as the Venice Biennale, the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, the South Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge, and the Museu de arte de São Paulo (MASP). Marakatt-Labba has also been the recipient of numerous prizes, medals, and other awards. There is even a documentary, *Historjá—Stitches for Sápmi* from 2022, about the artist and her work.

However, during the first forty years of her professional life, her art was shown in venues that the larger art world doesn't typically reward or hold in high esteem. Born into a reindeer herding family in 1951, Marakatt-Labba's artistic trajectory has wound its way through the art programme at Sunderby Residential College for Adult Education in northern Sweden and the Academy of Design and Crafts (HDK) in Gothenburg. This was then followed by a period of her working as an art teacher in Kárášjohka/Karasjok as well as making numerous small-scale exhibitions on the Norwegian and Swedish sides of Sápmi. Similarly, it was municipal and regional institutions in the North that acquired these works rather than the national museum collections. Many of the organizations that invited her to participate in projects were Sámi. Likewise, the writers and curators who have called the most attention to her art are typically coming from outside the mainstream, focusing on the art of indigenous peoples, women artists, arts and crafts, and Sámi

handicrafts, known as *duodji*. Later, Marakatt-Labba was showcased in southern Fennoscandia, Canada, Japan, and many other countries, culminating in exhibitions in Kassel and Venice, the absolute highlights of the contemporary art world. The past, present, and future of Sápmi and the Sámi people have been the enduring hub that everything revolves around in her textile universe. *Historjá*, for example, is a tale about the history, mythology, and contemporary life of the Sámi. It is a tour de force of self-determination and at the same time a conceptual stronghold and a feat of beautiful craftsmanship. While one group of works carry titles connected to everyday life, for example *The Slaughter*, *Just Woke Up*, and *Snow Fall*, another one depicts groups of people involved with collective activities such as discussions, counsels, and negotiations. A third body of work points towards the spiritual side of life, they are called things like *Cosmos*, *Roots*, and *Drumbeat*. She often refers to different worlds; on the one hand the world of the Sámi and on the other hand that of the dominant society but also the world belonging to the earth's surface, the underworld, and the world above us.

The racist abuse of the Sámi by the so-called racial biologists, who during the first decades of the twentieth century subjected many people to humiliating body measurements and photographic documentation, is brought up in works such as *Skulls* and *Measuring*. Themes that have become more and more common in her oeuvre are practices of mineral extraction, clearcutting of forests, and the climate crisis. All of them are intimately bound to the daily life of the reindeer herders, for example when the animals cannot reach their food—the lichen—because thin layers of ice caused by the fluctuating temperatures cause sudden layers of ice to appear on the snow. Brought up again and again is the mine in Giron, the world's largest underground iron ore mine, and how it so deeply affects people living and working in the area.

Marakatt-Labba's visual language is simplified, partly turning towards the naïve and partly to abstraction. The shapes seem to gently emerge from the background and in addition, the majority of the works' horizontality underlines their epic character. At the same time, each work invites close inspection—as a viewer you need to sharpen your gaze. Each work is full of enticing elements, revealing enchantment with materials and transmitting a sense of joy of making, albeit it being a slow and laborious process. The curve, the fundamental element initiating circles and ovals, is central in Sámi culture, and in her work too; we encounter them in *lavvus*, tipis, hearths, smoke holes, corrals, and beds, among others. She herself was born in such a circle, in a *lavvu* during the move from the summer grazing land on the Norwegian side to the winter habitat on the Swedish side. In fact, traditionally, the Sámi do not use objects with sharp angles, as the most practical way to pack all belongings for a raid is in containers and items with rounded edges. Throughout, she has challenged conventional notions of center and periphery and of what is essential and worth striving for, not only for herself as a person and artist but also for all art, as a whole.

It is fruitful to consider her artistic path in parallel with, on the one hand, her fellow Sámi artists Synnøve Persen and Hans Ragnar Mathisen (aka Elle Hånsa), who also participated in documenta 14. Whereas Persen has mostly cultivated an abstract idiom and designed the Sámi flag, Mathisen/Hånsa has reclaimed the image of Sápmi through maps containing Sámi place names and reverse geographical perspectives. But Marakatt-Labba's route can also be compared with artists from the North of Sweden who do not have a Sámi background, such as the public school teacher Berta Hansson (1910–1994) from Hamnerdal, who beat the odds to become a professional artist; the informal painter Kajsa Zetterquist (b. 1936), who settled in Saltfjället along with her husband Per Adde (1926–2020); and the Kiruna inhabitant Aili Kangas (1924–2000), who

may be seen as the “the Tornedalian Giorgio Morandi of Norrbotten County.” These are highly dissimilar artistic practices, but they all relate to the lives and landscapes of northern Sweden and Norway. Then there are such important historical Sámi forerunners as Johan Turi (1854–1936) and Nils Nilsson Skum (1872–1951), whose drawings of reindeer in mountain landscapes readily recall Marakatt-Labba’s iconography.

The fact that it was Elsa Agélii who was her instructor at HDK in Gothenburg is not insignificant. Beyond their similarity in embroidering socially conscious narratives, Agélii was an active participant in the 1970s, a decade that saw the second wave of feminism make deep inroads both in Sweden and elsewhere, which was itself one of the prerequisites for Marakatt-Labba’s success. In the realm of art, this feminist resurgence meant that textile works not only became more common but were also more widely accepted and appreciated. Traditionally, female artists were more engaged in textile art than men, as exemplified by avant-garde artists such as Anni Albers (1899–1994) and Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979) and the personal surrealist Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010). In Sweden, Marakatt-Labba’s political involvement can be compared with that of Siri Derkert’s (1888–1973) and Vera Nilsson’s (1888–1979). Both women who made their voices known on the critical issues of their time, for example in support of the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War and against nuclear weapons. As with Marakatt-Labba, it took some time before they were recognized by the majority society.

Marakatt-Labba’s art has indeed been shaped by her experience growing up during a period when Sámi culture was still relatively strong. From a young age, she has devoted herself to *duodji*, Sámi craft, as well as making regalia and other pieces of clothing constructed from fabric and leather. Since the mid-1980s, she

and her husband, who is a reindeer herder, have lived in Badje Sohppar, some thirty kilometers from her home village. Beside her creative work, she has been keen on taking political matters into her own hands. In addition to being part of the Sámi artist collective known as the Mázejuavku (Máze Group) from 1979, she participated the following year in the so-called Alta protests, which opposed the hydroelectric development of the Áltà-Guovdageaidnu/Alta-Kautokeino River system that threatened to inundate several communities and large reindeer grazing areas. She also helped co-found the Sámi Artist Union (SDS) in Johkamohkki/Jokkmokk in 1979 and sat on its board until 1984. Thus, developing an infrastructure that could showcase Sámi art, making it accessible to a wider audience, as an essential part of her legacy. In addition, she has taken responsibility for Sámi heritage, livelihood, culture, and for the artistic field at large by, for example, sitting on the board of the Swedish Sámi interests’ group SSR (*Svenska Samers Riksförbund*) and the Artists’ Association of Sweden.

Britta Marakatt-Labba is a former art teacher passionate about art being available to as many people as possible, including those who live in sparsely populated areas. She cites the importance of being active and showing her works in her local community, where the tradition of arts and crafts remains strong to this day. Both the people on her home turf and the Sámi *duodji* are essential sources that serve her creativity, as exemplified by her 2012 solo exhibition in Giron’s old town hall, held under the auspices of the local amateur art association. Being part of the Giron-based female art collective Koncentrat has clearly been at least as worthwhile for her as pursuing her practice in one of the global art capitals would have been. All in all, political engagement and collective action have been a common thread in her adult life, including as well in as she’s been seen participating in demonstrations against oil drilling in the Arctic and working in favor of climate justice.

Historjá's rise to prominence, along with the growing appreciation of Marakatt-Labba's work worldwide, should be seen as part of a broader revival of Sámi art and culture, which, in turn, is linked to a powerful global movement for decolonial justice that has emerged in the twenty-first century. This movement is rooted in the commitment to the rights, history, and culture of indigenous peoples, as well as their lands, raw materials, and other natural resources. Projects such as mines, windmill farms, and the clearcutting of forests are indeed more and more present in her recent work, as are the effects of climate change, which deeply affect Sámi life in the north. But as a consequence of her standing, new generations of Sámi artists are now more involved in both national and international contexts. This is evident in the Sámi participants at the 2022 Venice Biennale, the so-called Sámi Pavilion that was part of the Nordic Pavilion the same year, and the Sámi architect and artist Joar Nango's collective presentation at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2023.

Importantly, Marakatt-Labba's work is not only part of the revival—but is also a direct catalyzer for it. In her work—a labor of love of sorts—she turns Sápmi into a horizon from where it is possible to gaze out upon the rest of the world. It is, after all, in the Arctic that many of the major issues of our time play out: the climate crisis is more palpable here and the extraction of raw materials is drastically increasing under the so-called “Green Transition,” which itself infringes upon the rights of the indigenous peoples, to their lands and ways of living. Their age-old belief that land is only ever on loan and that there is an obligation to maintain nature's balance stands in stark contrast to the reality of that balance being broken. From that, we should pause and note that some of the figures in *Historjá* wear blue hats, a color that in the artist's area stands for grief; what is happening to Sámi culture? To the planet? Plants and animals talk to all human beings, but the question is who's listening.

Maria Lind

As part of the exhibition, a series of lectures and talks—The Future of Sápmi—have been arranged based on the themes and questions found in Britta Marakatt-Labba's work. Among the topics that will be included are how reindeer husbandry is affected by both climate change and windmill farms and in addition, as the impact of the mining industry on Sámi life. The series was conceived by investigative journalist and writer, Arne Müller, and realized in collaboration with ABF, the Workers' Educational Association and Hägerstensåsens Medborgarhus in Stockholm, from where it will also be streamed.

As part of the exhibition, several towns in the region of Norrbotten will hold events organized around the works of Britta-Marakatt Labba, all of which are on display as a part of their permanent collections. Among the towns are Våhtjer/Jiellvárre/Gällivare, Johkamohkki/Jokkmokk, and Julevu/Luleå.

List of Works

1. *Historjá*

The 24-meter long and 40-cm high textile work *Historjá* by Britta Marakatt-Labba is an embroidered tale about the history, mythology, and contemporary life of the Sámi. It was commissioned by KORO (Public Art Norway) and UiT: The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø (2003). From the start the work took four years to complete. The work is sometimes described as a contemporary version of the legendary Bayeux tapestry from the eleventh century. But while the Bayeux tapestry shows King William the Conqueror's victory in the bloody battle of Hastings in 1066, *Historjá* tells the story of the colonized people of Sápmi from time immemorial to the present day. That being, it follows the eight seasons of the region and in parallel the route of the reindeer herding Sámi, traversing from the forests on the Swedish side of Sápmi to the mountains and the coastal Sámi of the Atlantic, on the Norwegian side.

The story begins in a primeval forest with the faces of Sáráhkka, Uksáhkka, and Juoksáhkka, the Sámi goddesses of fertility, the home, and hunting, it should as well be read counterclockwise. Among the birch trees, the goddesses are accompanied by the souls of primeval mothers, all adorned with the red Sámi horn cap that was forbidden by the church in the nineteenth century. In the artist's own iconography, the ládjogahpir, horn caps, stand for strength, pride, and magic. Already here, the play with the plain surface of the white linen is contrasted with patches of black and white fabric applied with long white sutures forming tree trunks and black strips giving shape to the branches. The linen itself functions as both the snowy ground and the white sky. Wild animals—a fox and a bunch of bears, some elk and wolverines, a trio of lynxes and a pack of wolves—follow a group of people in Sámi clothes on skies. They carry spears, bows, and arrows, chasing wild reindeer, like the

Sámi once did before the animals became half-domesticated. They are then followed by seven reindeer pulling sleds with people and luggage, reminiscent of how the nomadic Sámi once transported their belongings along the trails of their herds.

The delicate woollen stitches lead us to the left along the pictorial band where there are even more raids with reindeer pulling sleds—a large group of Sámi are moving from the right to the left, just as the reindeer always move counterclockwise in the corrals. The stitches are dense when they form animals, humans, and *lavvus*—mobile tipis, sparse when they make up smoke coming from the *lavvus*, falling snow, and fences. At this point in Marakatt-Labba's tale, some people on snow mobiles take over the transportation, as was the case in the 1970s, still heading left, or in the life of reindeer herders, from the forests on the Swedish side in the winter-spring to the Norwegian side where the summer grazing takes place. Inside four corrals the reindeer run in circles, before they are separated into smaller groups in order for the winter food to last. A large herd moves across the mountain and down the slope, alongside light blue rivers, to the ocean where they swim next to fishing boats and the drying racks of fish. This is the home of the sea Sámi, whose historical habitat is the coast of Norway. Horizontal green stitches represent grass, which is collected and dried on wooden structures. Nearby are cows munching away in a meadow, while other cows stand inside a stable. This refers both to Sámi farming and to the *verdde* system's 'hosting families,' with whom the artist's family used to stay every summer, much like many other Sámi families did with settlers on both the Norwegian and Swedish sides of Sápmi.

There is then a drastic change of setting: a group of people with sticks in their hands approach a burning church next to which a brawl takes place. Two of the figures carry executioner's axes while little red stitches lead to a body and a severed head, alongside

skulls and crosses in a cemetery. This alludes to the events of Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino in 1852 when a group of Sámi attacked representatives of the Norwegian authorities, setting fire to the local shop and killing the priest as well as the local shop's owner. Three of the attackers were eventually convicted to death by beheading. In Marakatt-Labba's version it is the church that is burning, an institution that has been one of the main oppressors of the Sámi.

Another significant Sámi uprising, the one against the damming of the Áltà-Guovdageaidnu/Alta-Kautokeino River system in the years around 1980 in which the artist took active part, paving the way for the 1987 establishment of the Sámi Parliament on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, whose *lavvu*-shaped building is depicted next. A state agency without proper jurisdiction, the Sámi parliament nevertheless means recognition and some influence on the part of the Sámi. The story continues with a mound of reindeer antlers, a site of sacrifice, and the three goddesses kneeling in front of a *seite*, a holy rock. They pray and make offerings for the right of the Sámi culture to survive and for the land to be conserved and protected. A core concept for the Sámi is precisely this, one that implies using just enough resources to get by. It is not allowed to take more from nature, whether flora or fauna, than you need for the day. The scene with the kneeling goddesses marks the end of the first half of *Historjá*, a transition visible both through a new piece of linen background and a different pictorial sphere.

Like all parts of *Historjá*, the next one invites close inspection as there are plenty of details to discover. An example being the four compactly embroidered black running dogs and the white and yellow stars, created by dying the dark-blue parts of the big sky, while sparing the small angular white shapes with yellow dots within. Now we enter the cosmos. There is a knife, scales, a spear,

and a cauldron, as well as words in North Sámi; the mother tongue of the artist. Historically, the Sámi could travel during the Arctic night thanks to the stars and moon, which bright enough could light the way. Superimposed on the next section are the yellow outlines of a shaman's drum, a significant object in Sámi culture, often adorned with drawings on its skin. Here, the artist has created her own symbolism, for example fourteen people who look at a starry sky, while being mirrored below but without color. It is their reflections in the underworld, one of the three worlds of the Sámi. Every person has such a double in the underworld, mirroring their soul. Another drum outline contains a reindeer herd led by white animals, along with two 'see-through' *lavvus*: one showing children sharing four beds, and the other featuring an open fire and fir tree branches. We are taken to the reality of the children who from the late nineteenth century, from the age of seven, were forced to go to school in unheated "school *lavvus*." Later, residential boarding-schools were mandatory for the nomadic Sámi, the artist and her siblings being no exception, and these were mostly located far away from their families.

Fascination with nature and its astounding phenomena, which is part and parcel of Sámi culture, comes across in the motif of people in a long line sitting inside a white dome, representing a unique celestial event. Their heads are lifted, gazing at a starry sky. Such enthrallment with the wonders of the environment tends to lead to the creation of stories and pictures, which is exactly what Marakatt-Labba is doing. In this way, she is partaking in a mighty tradition which has mostly been kept alive by oral storytelling and through *joiks*, Sámi folk songs. Proverbs and the play of children also have a place in the narrative of *Historjá*; in front of three *lavvus* with smoke rising from the open top there are children defying the advice of the adults to never tease the Northern light, or else it will come down to earth and abduct them.

The final section of *Historjá* shows a mountain with melting snow where Stallo, a mythical figure who is strong but stupid and who abducts naughty children, is walking with a child on his back. They are following in the footsteps of yet another reindeer herd leading to two big blue circles. Like the two *lavvus* seen from above, with fir tree branches and beds with people on the floor, each contain a second circle where the three goddesses appear once more. One is aiming to the left with a bow and arrow, the other two are looking in opposite directions. This leads us to where we first began, to the primeval forest with the goddesses and the primeval mothers *ládjogahpir*, the red horn cap. A full circle has been completed and we can start anew.

2. *In the Footsteps of the Stars III*, 2024

The exhibition at Kin has borrowed its title from this work. Inside a number of concentric circles in different blue nuances is a white ring in which a lucky white reindeer is pulling an *akkja* sled. The snow is depicted in the white linen fabric and through sparse, white stitches. Five glowing yellow stars are set against a dark blue sky. In the *akkja* is a stripey *rana*, a kind of woven fabric common in Sámi households that can also be used as a bedcover. Inside the inner circle, which resembles a *lavvu*, tipi seen from above, three people are sleeping underneath *rana* cloths. Sky, water, snow, a home, and a lonely journey through the night in the footsteps of the stars. This work captures life's big and small things through appliqué, short and long stitches, and dyed fabric.

3. *Stallo and the Three Sisters*, 1978

The puppet theater, created in 1978, is the artist's graduation piece from the crafting course at HDK in Gothenburg. Draped in red fabric, the theater sets the stage for the story of Stallo and the three sisters. The hand puppets are made of papier mâché and fabric. Stallo is a mythological figure whose home is in the underworld. He is big and strong but also naïve and easily fooled. He kidnaps unruly children.

4. *The Circle is Sealed*, 1995

Against a white background inside a circle, five figures have been embroidered as if they are floating. A man and a woman hold hands while three figures float above them. Two of them are wearing the red horn hat, *ládjogahpir*. The circle is surrounded by thin blue fabric, through which the embroidered red signature can be seen. The image is held together by a zig-zag pattern of red thread. Round shapes and lines often appear in Marakatt-Labba's work, as it does in much of Sámi culture. They reflect both the culture's cyclical view of time, and the fact that most historic Sámi artefacts have been created without straight edges for practical reasons.

5. *Summer*, 1987

Like in many other early works, the stitches are dense in this picture. Unusually enough, there are no people in the quiet summer landscape.

6. *The Crows*, 1981

The Crows was first created in 1981 and is among Marakatt-Labba's most well-known works. Almost forty years later, she created a new version, with the addition of a Sámi flag. The work is about protesting the damming of Ältå-Guovdageaidnu/Alta-Kautokeino River system, which culminated in a large demonstration in 1981, which the artist participated in leading to her arrest. Like all power plant constructions in Sápmi, this dam would strongly affect and deteriorate Sámi life and culture. Large areas would be flooded, claimed by outsiders, and rivers would be dried out. On the right-hand side are three *lavvus*, tipis, around which demonstrators are seated in protest. From the right, a row of black crows, flying into the image and making a U-turn. As they get near the demonstrators, they turn into policemen, marching into the encampments to remove the protesters. In the Sámi tradition, animals have different character traits and can be associated with humans.

The crows encroach on other people's territories and grab what they want. Even though the dam was built in the end despite opposition, this was the starting point for several reforms in Norwegian society. As a result, the Sámi population were granted more rights and a Sámi Parliament was instated in Kárášjohka/Karasjok in 1989. Although its powers are limited, the Sámi Parliament works according to parliamentary principles with the aim of strengthening the political voice of the Sámi people. Around twenty thousand Sámi in Norway have voting rights in the Sámi Parliament today.

7. *Nightmare, 1986*

In the middle of the image is a circle, indicating a *lavvu*, tipi, seen from above. All along the walls of the tent are people sleeping in different positions, using stripy *rana* textiles as bedcovers. Some lie head to toe, others parallel, and still others sleep facing each other. One person is sleeping on their stomach, and another has kicked off their bedcovers. They are all part of a nightmare in which rats the size of human beings pour in through the opening of the tent, invading the dreamers' most intimate space. Not only are they invading the home, but the beds. By the stones of the fireplace, *arran*, lie decapitated and limbless human bodies. The rats have bitten off their body parts. Three heads are also lined up next to each other.

8. *Childbirth, 1983*

Marakatt-Labba has created many works about the daily life of reindeer herders in Sápmi, which involves taking part in reindeer caravans, reindeer roundups, fishing, and slaughter. In *Childbirth*, a midwife is helping a woman give birth. They are in a *lavvu*, tipi, on a simple bed made of branches, next to a large iron cauldron. Outside, children and adults stand in a line under gray clouds, the mountains turning blue behind them. Judging by the details on the clothes, this birth is taking place at some point in the middle of the twentieth century. We are in fact witnessing the birth of the artist herself. She

was born in the autumn of 1951 when the family was on its way back from the Norwegian side and its summer pastures.

9. *The Journey II, 1989-2021*

The story of a funeral is unveiled through embroidery in the second version of *The Journey*. A group of people in traditional Sámi dress follow a coffin decorated with flowers and carried by six people. There are some children among them. A church is on the left. This is someone's final journey; an empty grave awaits the funeral procession. An orange ladder leads to the adjacent grave, where the ground is covered with skulls. Under a few memorial crosses are another two ladders, and a handful of people who appear to be studying something. No less than twenty coffins with black contours make up the lower part of the image. Half of them are filled with skulls. The rest are reminiscent of the beds that the artist so often embroiders, where stripy *rana* textiles are used as bedcovers. It is as if the figures inside are simply resting. We are reminded of daily life by a group of people next to the coffins. Two are conversing, another is reading a newspaper, and another two are studying a red object. Life goes on even in the most difficult of times.

10. *Liberated, 1985*

Against a white landscape where different areas are demarcated with red sticks, a skier is taking a moment to answer nature's call.

11. *Untitled, 1987-88*

This is one of the larger works in the exhibition. At the center of the image is a reindeer enclosure set against a white landscape with an embroidered appliqué sky. Inside the enclosure, the reindeer are running—as always—counterclockwise. Within that circle, people ride snowmobiles and ski. Outside the enclosure, some people ski after the reindeer, while others sit in *akkjas*. There are dogs running around all over the place. Each animal, human, and snowmobiles has been embroidered individually, with distinct features. According

to tradition, a white reindeer is a sign of luck, and held in a smaller enclosure is an entire flock of white reindeer, some of which are being reigned in with lassos. This immensely detailed work is a snapshot of the reindeer roundup that takes place in the winter, when large reindeer herds are divided into smaller groups to make sure that the animals have enough to graze on.

12. Fishing, 1984

The largest part of the vertical image plane is made up of blue fabric with a layer of thin white fabric on top, like a fishing net. The fish themselves sit in a boat on the surface of the water. Dark gray mountains are set against a gray and white appliqué sky.

13. Fishing II, 2009

14. Fishers, 1982

This embroidered piece from 1982 depicts five adults and a child out fishing, some of them watching on. Fishing for salmon has from the earliest of times been a part of the Sámi life and diet. For a long time, taxes were paid to the Swedish Royal Court in part with dried fish. Here, the red salmon are swimming in the river and out into the sea. While the sky is made up of one piece of applied blue fabric, the ground is made up of dense stitchwork. The artist would later leave this method behind to instead work with large, unembroidered sections in her pieces.

15. Net Fishing

Net Fishing is embroidered with woollen yarn which is densely stitched, a technique used frequently by the artist early on in her work. Two figures are seated in a boat, one rowing while the other is dragging a net. Grey mountains tower over the scene, and the white linen here is used to represent the snow. Red salmon swim in the dark blue water all moving in the same direction.

16. Flying Shamans, 1986

Flying Shamans was created a few years after the noteworthy protests held against the hydropower development plans in the Áltà-Guovdageaidnu/Alta-Kautokeino River system on the Norwegian side of Sápmi. Marakatt-Labba was deeply involved herself and participated in the sit-in demonstration, to which hundreds of policemen were deployed to stop the uprising. In this work, embroidered male figures, many of which are policemen, are dropped into the water by flying shamans, *noaidi*. There are also rats. Rats show up in several works, where they represent that which is intrusive, boundless, and repulsive.

17. Dance on a Tightrope, 1988

Two embroidered nude female figures hold each other's hands while walking along a red tightrope high above the ground set against a blue background. The left side of the tightrope is held up by white birds, while the right is carried by black birds with glowing white eyes. In a recess in the ground below, created using appliqué, lies a third naked woman. Some of the black birds are sitting nearby, waiting like scavengers for their prey. Has one of the women been overzealous and fallen to the ground? The artist skillfully uses the characteristics of the various colorful materials and the uneven tones of the sky to create a dynamic setting for a dramatic event.

18. The Treeline, 2022

This work uses a white silk fabric that is slightly rougher than those usually employed. The blue and green dyed sections fade out at the edges, creating an impression of mist. The heads of goddesses for protection emerge in front of a line of embroidered black and white bare trees, wearing red horn caps, *ladjogahpir*. Some can also be discerned behind the trees, and two of them wear "the hat of the four winds," with four corners. This hat is worn primarily in the areas around Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, Eanodat/Entontekiö and Ohcejoga/Utsjoki.

19. *Migratory Route*, 1998

This is one of several works showing reindeer caravans, with many reindeer and *akkja* sleds arranged in a row. *Akkjas* were custom until snowmobiles were widely introduced during the 1970s. The white fabric becomes the snow against which we see embroidered people and animals. Above them is a sky, created by an appliquéd piece of blue fabric. Sámi people who engage in reindeer husbandry are constantly moving between different pastures, and places used for slaughtering, calving, and marking the animals. Marakatt-Labba emphasizes the route of movement using the work's horizontal form.

20. *They Kept Watch at Night*, 2009

The white fabric here acts as a snow-covered background when the Virgin Mary, dressed in her blue robe, rides in from the left on a reindeer led by Joseph. He is travelling on skis, wearing “the hat of the four winds.” In the middle of the image, the couple appears once more, on their way to a *lavvu*. In the opening of the tipi, we can just about discern a newly-born child. Underneath a yellow star outside, three men kneel and hold out gifts. They have come into the picture from the right, together with a herd of reindeer, and are pointing at the star. Surrounding the figures is a sparse birchwood forest and blue mountains. The artist here uses a method known as simultaneous narration, where several isolated events are depicted together. She also portrays the classical Christian motifs of the Nativity and the Three Magi so that the Sámi way of life becomes the setting for one of the most important stories in Western culture.

21. *The Pathfinder*, 2022–23

In an appliquéd blue circle at the center of the piece are five yellow stars and around ten heads. Some are wearing Sámi headwear while others have only a few dark, slicked-back hairs. The yellow contour

of a Sámi drum has been applied to the white fabric as a separator. Both inside and outside the contour are minimal black-and-white tree trunks, which are mirrored underneath, as a representation of the Sámi underworld. The figures at the highest point in the circle seem to be—reminiscent of signposts—leading the way for another group that finds itself above the treetops.

22. *Beyond Everything I*, 2022

Beyond Everything I is an example of how Marakatt-Labba incorporates spiritual motifs in her work, in addition to her depictions of Sámi daily life and reindeer husbandry, the challenges around mineral extraction, felled forests, and global warming. A large blue appliquéd circle, surrounded by thinner pieces of light-blue fabric forms another two circles, resemble a starry sky with veils of white fabric. An entire cosmos has been placed next to a smaller circle, in which there is a bed of branches embroidered using black threads. Inside the branch bed is a ring of heads wearing the *ládjogahpir*, the horn cap of the primeval mothers, both in red and blue. Another circle inside of the ring is blue. Like in the final section of *Historjá*, it contains one primeval mother, gazing to the west. Is this the beginning of an origin story, framed at the top by the yellow contour of the Sámi drum?

23. *Hijacked Migration Route*, 2022

Like many other works from the past decade, *Hijacked Migration Route* deals with the difficulties faced by Sámi people engaged in reindeer husbandry due to the mining, wind power, and large-scale deforestation industries in the area. Problems arise when the migratory routes that have traditionally been used to move reindeer are cut off and used for other purposes. In Giron/Kiruna, the Sámi villages Laevas and Gabna have been affected. In this piece, a row of white reindeer wander, with a person tucked into an *akkja*, a sled, behind them. In the background is the silhouette of two mining

mountains, easily recognizable as LKAB in Giron. Among the birch trees, we recognize two primeval mothers with their red horn hats, ládjogahpir. A yellow glow can be seen between the mining mountains and above that a flock of black birds. The artist here combines embroidery and appliqué, short and long stitches, empty and occupied surfaces.

24. *The Environment Cannot Wait, 2019*

The background in this piece is colored in different shades of blue and green, an unusual choice for the artist. A herd of reindeer runs towards the left of the image into a birchwood forest, where a group of primeval mothers wearing ládjogahpir, red horn caps, can be discerned between the trees. All of them are facing the opposite direction. In the foreground, their heads pop out of a river, noses pointing to the left. At the top of the image is the embroidered contour of the LKAB mine, which is in a constant phase of expansion. But the environment cannot wait if we are to protect it and preserve Sámi living conditions.

25. *Full Carriages, 2022*

This image is a common sight in Giron/Kiruna and northeast towards Riksgränsen: a steady stream of black railroad carriages full to the brim with iron ore, travelling in front of the mine's characteristic stair-like outline. LKAB has around eleven hundred carriages in constant operation. They go on the Iron Ore Line to Riksgränsen and then onto Áhkánjárga/Narvik on the Atlantic coast. This is Sweden's most highly trafficked railroad line, with over twenty iron ore trains per day in comparison to the four passenger trains.

26. *Luossa—The Lake That Was Emptied, 2020*

Between the mountains Gironvárri/Kirunavaara and Luossavárri/Luossavaara in Giron/Kiruna is a lake. As the mine has continued to grow, the lake has gradually reduced in size. It used to be a popular swimming spot, but now few people dare to go there.

27. *Sustainable Fuel: Reindeer Lichen, 2022–23*

Reindeer lichen is part of a group of works where the structure of the background fabric is central to the piece, whereas the motif consists of just a few details. A clear blue dyed section can be seen in the middle here and at the bottom a reindeer caravan with four *akkjas*, sleds. All the reindeer are white, a symbol of luck. Their “fuel” during the winters is reindeer lichen, which grows primarily in pine tree forests.

28. *Global Warming II, 2021*

This complex appliqué piece shimmers in different shades of white and blue and is one of the artist's most abstract works. As is often the case, the image is built up around a circle in the middle, where some heads of primeval mother with red horn hats, ládjogahpir, form the epicenter. Nearby them is some kind of fence and zig-zagged shape. Concentric circles consisting of shards, what is left when something is smashed into pieces, continue outwards until they are framed in by a blue square, also made up of shards. The entire surface of the work consists of many small pieces of fabric—shards—that seem to tell us that both nature and culture fall apart as the earth's temperature continues to rise.

29. *Events in Time, 2013*

The artist created *Events in Time* two years after the massacre on Utøya, where seventy-seven people were murdered in cold blood by a right-wing extremist. Most of the victims were young and politically active on the left. The work consists of five pieces of fabric hanging from the ceiling that together form a circle. The viewer can enter and exit the circle to look at both sides. The fabric is from discarded flour bags made in Germany during the Second World War, which the artist's family at one point traded for on the Norwegian side of Sápmi where they have their summer pasture. One of the pieces of fabric tapers upwards—it once served as the door to a *lavvu*, tipi.. Among the embroidered motifs are handguns.

30. *Kiruna, 1990*

In three parts, the artist returns to the city where she attended school and that she still visits today. As in many other works from the early 1990s, she has applied large pieces of fabric in muted tones on top of each other, often using long stitching and veil-like coverings at the edges. In this way, she creates partially abstract images, notably here with LKAB's mine at the center, depicted using silver fabric. In front of the mine are the printed silhouettes of reindeer and below them, red salmon swimming in the river. Small, embroidered snowmobiles, reindeer with *akkjas*, sleds, and people skiing after the reindeer can be seen on the left side, combined with large stitches that evoke handwriting. The latter is connected to the right side, which represents a letter from Radiotjänst, the former name for Radio Sweden (Sveriges Radio). When the work was created, everyone paid a TV license. The question is if they sufficiently reported on the consequences that both mining and the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl had on reindeer owners and thereby on Sámi culture.

31. *The Door, 2012*

The well-used door of a *lavvu*, tipi, acts as an entry to one of the artist's rare installations. Hanging from the ceiling, it has been patched up and mended. The bottom and back section have been embroidered. Like in a normal *lavvu*, the fireplace, *arran*, is in the middle. Here it has been represented using six differently colored stones on the ground. Carved into the stones are words and names of places in Northern Sámi, such as Sohppar, Soppero, and *johtin* (the journey). There is a small pile of soil in the middle. The wooden frame of another *lavvu* door is also part of the work and hangs on the adjacent wall.

32. *The Package, 1993*

After the accident at the nuclear power station in Chernobyl in 1986, the artist began creating artworks that used letters and packages

as a theme. She wanted to express and communicate, not least to leaders and powerholders, that reindeer husbandry had been badly affected: high levels of the radioactive element becquerel were measured in reindeer meat following the accident. The piece is made up of large, square pieces of fabric that have been applied to one another. In the top right corner is a stylized stamp showing the postage cost of ten Swedish crowns. A kind of highly simplified, embroidered handwriting covers the surface to the left, where a row of reindeer silhouettes has been printed using stencils.

33. *Shards, 1996*

Two images that look like stamps have been applied on top of a background of neutral cotton, one of which shows the contours of a person wearing a Sámi horn cap, *ládjogahpir*. The other contains black shapes that look like shards, a shape that the artist has often used to evoke how traditional Sámi culture has been shattered. On the left side of the background are long white stitches that could be interpreted as some kind of abstract handwriting. She has herself written many times to authorities and newspapers to express her discontent with current developments.

34. *The Milky Way, 2022*

A dark blue circle is set against a black background. In it are two more circles, the innermost of which displays a starry sky with large appliquéd yellow stars. On the stars are the primeval mothers with their red horn hats, *ládjogahpir*. Around them are smaller embroidered stars and one huge appliquéd sun-like star, containing a man and woman in traditional Sámi dress. They have been added on top with dense stitches and look like they are about to embrace one another. Around the dome of the sky are scenes from Sámi life: a reindeer caravan with snowmobiles, Sámi seamen fishing for red salmon, iron ore, *lavvus*, tipis, birch trees, beds with *ranas* as bedcovers, a wind farm, a reindeer herd and Sámediggi, the Sámi Parliament in Kárášjohka/Karasjok at the very

top. The piece was commissioned for the *Storting* and hangs in a room where members of parliament meet and hold press conferences.

35. *Chasuble*, 2009

Since the 1980s, the artist has been commissioned to create several textile pieces for different churches, such as the altar cloth at Karesuando/Gárasavvon Church and the choir copes for Vazáža/Vittangi Church. This chasuble, worn by the priest during the Eucharist, is blue. Like the color purple in the context of the Christian faith, blue symbolizes reflection, and it is prominent during the periods leading up to Christmas and Easter. In the Northern Sámi area where the artist grew up, however, blue represents sorrow. The front displays an embroidered and appliquéd round section, and on the back, we see the circular form of *lavvu*, tipi, the poles that hold it up, and several figures separated into four groups. Three of the groups depict Sámi people, who seem focused on the golden shimmer in the center. The fourth group is placed high up in the circle and is made up of three winged angels with trumpets. On the one hand, angels holding trumpets are a symbol of the apostle Matthew, and on the other it is used in the Book of Revelation to signal the coming of the apocalypse.

36. *The Forest Protects Life*, 1987–88

This large-scale triptych was acquired early on by Region Norrbotten. The same landscape is illustrated on two of the square section, with a mountain in the background. On one of them, in front of a line of red sticks, which Marakatt-Labba often uses to demarcate the image plane, are many symmetrically placed small spruce trees together with black birds eating a cadaver. On the other, all except one of the trees have been chopped down. A lonely bird sits there on a stump. The middle image consists of a circle at the center of the fabric, where reindeer horns have been lined up under five staffs with black arrows at the top. It looks like a traditional Sámi ritual site.

37. *The Throne*, 2019

A painted wooden throne has been placed on a piece of granite. The work is part of a series of small sculptures which otherwise depict women's heads.

38. *The Two of Us*, 2019

Casted in bronze and then painted, the sculpture is made up of a stone-like base with two heads on top. Like siamese twins, they share one body. The piece is part of a series of smaller sculptures mostly depicting women's heads. The title *The Two of Us* is the same as a work from 2017, where the heads of a woman and a man are turned towards each other.

39. *The Two of Us II*, 2019

40. *Seite*. 2019

Four small white and gray stones create a miniature *seite* here. They have been placed on a larger gray stone. The *seite* is a sacred object for the Sámi that can be found in nature, usually by lakes and rivers, or on the mountains. It can be a stone with an unusual shape, or like here, several stones placed on top of one another. The *seite* is a manifestation of divine power over vital natural resources.

41. *Máttaráhkká II*, 2019

Máttaráhkká is the primeval mother in Sámi mythology. She lives together with human beings in the *goahti* and *lavvu*, dwellings, together with her three daughters. Altogether, they play an important role during pregnancy and childbirth. She can be understood as a version of Mother Nature. In the small wooden sculpture, she can be seen wearing the North and East Sámi horn hat, *ladjogaphir*, which was banned by the church in the 1800s and has had a resurgence during the 2000s. This small wooden sculpture has also been placed on a small stone.

42. *In Between I, 2019*

Máttaráhkká, the primeval mother, has been placed on a small stone between two vertical stones, which are made up of a large stone that has split in two. She is stuck, with barely any room for movement.

43. *The Primordial Mother, 2019*

The primordial mother stands on a slab of gneiss, dressed in a horn hat, ládjogahpir. The head has been cast in bronze, and while the face has been left bronze-colored, the hat has been painted green.

44. *Drumbeat II, 2012*

The image in *Drumbeat* is based on the contours of a Sámi drum. Like in so many of Marakatt-Labba's pieces, the drum is yellow. On one part of the drum, people are seated as if in a meeting, wearing different kinds of Sámi headwear. A winged appliqué figure floats behind black-and-white tree trunks, holding a primeval mother wearing a ládjoagahpir, red horn cap. In turn, the primeval mother holds a long red thread leading to an *akkja*, sled, where three figures wearing horn hats are tucked in. The whole scene floats beneath a light-blue shimmer, created using a thin piece of fabric that has been attached with long, straight stitches. Something magical seems to be afoot.

45. *Round-table Meeting, 2000*

In one of the smallest pieces in the exhibition, a yellow oval has been put at the center of the image, a shape reminiscent of both a Sámi drum and a meeting table. A dozen embroidered people sit around it, in the first of four concentric ovals. All except one is wearing a headpiece, and several of the figures sport a red or blue horn hat, ládjogahpir. They have been assigned one seat each. An embroidered red cross pops up in some areas. Everybody's gaze is turned in towards the yellow oval, which begs the question: what is being discussed, negotiated, and decided upon here?

46. *We Wrote a Letter, 1995*

We Wrote a Letter is included in a series of small-scale square works from the mid-1990s. During this period, Marakatt-Labba often returned to the theme of letters. Here is a number of embroidered human figures sitting lined up, as if in a meeting or courtroom. Dense stitches are combined with sparse ones, and the linen background is applied next to a thin gray fabric. Horizontal white stitches at the bottom indicate snow, while red sturgeons lined up create a border.

47. *We Are Negotiating, 2023*

The yellow contour of the Sámi drum is used here to frame seven figures wearing different kinds of Sámi headwear. They are all facing to the right, and underneath is their mirror image but in black and white. This is a depiction of the underworld, where according to Sámi belief, everything that exists on earth also exists but upside down. The group is ready to negotiate, but with whom? Around them is a branch bed made up of long black stitches and some rougher, appliquéd black-and-white tree trunks. There are several works with titles like *Discussion*, *Conference*, and *Round-table Discussion*, which depict situations in which people—as they do here—collectively deal with an issue.

48. *Measurements, 2021–22*

Several works from the 2010s and the beginning of the 2020s have been created using found pieces of fabric. In *Measurements*, the artist has used a piece of linen discovered amongst her family belongings. On it is the German eagle, as seen on the country's coat of arms in the 1930s and 1940s, and a swastika. In the middle of the vertical piece of fabric, she has used embroidery to copy the certificate that her father-in-law, Johan Johansson Labba, received in 1943 from the county board in Luleju/Luleå. The certificate gave him permission to continue taking his reindeer

for summer grazing on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, despite the ongoing war. Presumably, the fabric has ended up with the family because of trade there. Underneath the swastika, the artist has illustrated several heads. This is denoting what took place between 1910 to approximately 1930, when the Nazi race biologist Herman Lundborg together with others, subjected Sámi people to degrading and pointless skull measurements as well as other forms of racist abuse. In this image, the eagle is being subjected to the same treatment, having its head and one of its wings measured. An embroidered reindeer caravan and a railroad track indicate two modes of transport that were available during the Second World War. The reindeer caravans do not recognize national borders and were allowed to continue throughout this period of war. Railroads were not blocked off either. Up until the end of the war, iron was transported from the Swedish ore fields to Germany. Between 1941 and 1944, Sweden accounted for no less than twenty five percent of Germany's demand for iron ore.

49. *Melody, 2017*

Melody is part of a series of five small embroideries with elements of appliqué that represent people's heads. In front of a woman's face is a row of primeval mothers in red horn caps, ládjogahpir, that look like notes in a score. Her features are depicted using a naïve visual language and she wears a red hat.

50. *Thoughts II, 2017*

With a pensive gaze, a man looks out of the image. His head and face are only partly rendered: his chin, left cheek, and forehead are missing. The viewer themselves must fill in those forms. Between the dark eyes and the thin-lipped mouth is a well-groomed pencil moustache. The picture is partnered with *Thoughts I*, which is of a woman's face.

51. *The Two of Us, 2017*

The title *The Two of Us* is shared with that of a small sculpture with the same motif: a man and a woman looking at each other. They are wearing Sámi headdresses, and we see them in profile.

52. *Thoughts I, 2017*

A woman's face is framed in on the left by black hair, depicted using lace-like black fabric. Her gaze is dark, and she looks restrained as she looks out of the frame. The right side of the head has been left undrawn. The work *Thoughts II* shows a man whose head on the left side is bare. Could they have been growing together and now they have split?

53. *Thoughts III, 2017*

Here, both the back and the front of the head of a woman with black hair and a red headdress are depicted. The details are embroidered and appliquéd clearly—the headdress is common in the area where the artist was born and is still living. Her face is reflected in a round mirror, and she looks pensive. This series, with its close-up studies of heads and its markedly psychological nature, is unusual in the artist's oeuvre.

54. *Traces, 2023*

Traces is one of the newest works in the exhibition, created in 2023 for Nasjonalmuseet in Oslo. In a way that is unusual for the artist, two pieces of fabric have been hung vertically side by side. The left uses colorful threads and appliquéd pieces of fabric to show the journey of iron ore from the mountain, through the mine and onto land. Black and white are used on the right side to depict a railroad track, a flock of reindeer, and animal tracks in the snow. Other visual elements include LKAB's mine in Giron/Kiruna with its characteristic stair-like form, wind farms, a *lavvu*, tipi, where people are tucked into bed, the contours of a Sámi drum and a flock

of white reindeer, all gathered beneath a starry dome; shards of a culture that looks as if it is about to be broken into pieces.

55. *Untitled, 1968*

This is the oldest work in the exhibition: a woven tapestry showing two female figures dressed in white. They have no discernible features and hold their arms out, like confirmands. The tapestry was made in 1968, when the artist was seventeen years old and attended a weaving course in Giron/Kiruna led by the legendary weaving teacher and craftswoman Doris Wiklund.

56. *The Relocation, 2012*

Relocation as a theme appears in Marakatt-Labba's work in various ways. Travelling with reindeer during different times of the year is one example, or in this case, relocating an entire town. This work is about one of the greatest urban development experiments in Sweden's history—one that has garnered international attention—namely the relocation of the old part of Giron/Kiruna. The artist was born and raised in Kiruna Municipality and has also lived in the urban area of Giron, which was founded at the turn of the twentieth century following the discovery of iron ore in the area. For hundreds of years, the area has been used by the Sámi villages Gabna and Laevas for reindeer husbandry, which has become an increasingly complicated endeavor since the mines were established. The mining company LKAB continues to dominate the city, and when it announced an expansion in 2004, an important part of the city's old center had to be torn down due to the risk of collapse. Since then, many buildings have been demolished, and some have been moved four kilometers away, to a newly built neighborhood constructed on a wetland. The artist uses holes and scratches in the fabric, which has evidently been well-used, to create an alternative map of the city. Black embroidered lines represent roads that here and there are interrupted by blue parking signs.

One sign points to the E10 motorway that goes all the way from Luleju/Luleå to Å in Norway, whose routes have been redrawn as part of the city relocation. Dotted around are the red horn hats, ládjogahpir, of the primeval mothers. A yellow star and a couple of heads also show up in the image. The viewer gets the impression of a broken territory, patched up and mended, dominated by a car-borne culture.

57. *Drumbeat I, 2012*

A section on a Sámi drum constitutes the frame around this image. The contours of the drum are colored light brown while the rest of the motif is embroidered and appliquéd. On the left is a *lavvu*, tipi, with a *rana* on the outside of the wall, seen from the side, and a bed with five people covered by a *rana*. The scene is depicted from above. Combining different visual perspectives is typical for Marakatt-Labba. Another common visual motif is that of the primeval mothers in the forest wearing red horn hats, ládjogahpir. Here they can be seen above black-and-white birch trees on the right-hand side of the image.

58. *Untitled, 2002*

A reindeer herd made up of differently coloured reindeer move toward the left of the image, with the exception of one white reindeer running in the opposite direction. Their horns are depicted with a few black stitches. The winter landscape is illustrated with the white background fabric and appliquéd sections in grey and white. At the bottom, creased, shimmery appliquéd fabric hints at fluffy snow.

In addition, there are several works on display in the exhibition, without numbers.

The Future of Sápmi: Lectures and Talks as Part of *In the Footsteps of the Stars—The Embroidered Worlds* of Britta Marakatt-Labba

October 2024–March 2025

As part of the exhibition, a series of lectures and talks have been organized by Kin based on the themes and questions brought up in Britta Marakatt-Labba's work. The series has been put together by the Umeå-based freelance journalist Arne Müller, who has written the books *Smutsiga miljarder: den svenska gruvboomens baksida* (2013) and *Norrskén: drömmen om den gröna industrin* (2023). In collaboration with ABF and Hägerstensåsens medborgarhus in Stockholm where the events will be streamed.

Saturday, October 26

14:00 The Dream of Green Industry: Part 1

Lecture by Arne Müller, freelance journalist and author, Ubmeje/Umeå. Respondent: Rickard Eriksson, professor of Economic Geography at Umeå University.

Northern Sweden has become a haven for industrial investment. In total, around SEK 1400 billion is expected to go into industries in Norrbotten and Västerbotten County. It is estimated that around 100,000 people are needed in both counties within the next ten years to fill the newly created job vacancies. The ventures have raised hopes, but they do not come without risks and complications. Is it possible to build housing and expand public services at the same rate as the rapid growth of the industries? How great are the

economic risks that the affected municipalities will have to become liable for? Will the entire region benefit from the projects, or will regional discrepancies widen? Who gets to decide on the next steps of a process that is so fast paced?

Arne Müller is a journalist and author based in based in Ubmeje/Umeå. He has previously worked as an editor for SVT local news in Västerbotten County, and in 2013 he made his debut as an author with the book *Smutsiga miljarder: den svenska gruvboomens baksida*, (Dirty Billions: The Pitfalls of the Swedish Mining Boom). The book investigates environmental issues within the Swedish mining industry. Since then, Müller has written six books, the latest of which explores the industrial developments in the north that are being planned in conjunction with the so-called green transition (*Norrskén: drömmen om den gröna industrin*). In 2017, Müller resigned from SVT to focus full-time on the issues that he finds most pressing: the climate transition, natural resources, and regional discrepancies.

Rikard Eriksson is a professor of Economic Geography and a research manager at the Centre for Regional Science (CERUM) both at Umeå University. His research is primarily focused on the geography of work and what affects regional differences in terms of employment and welfare. He is currently managing a seven-year-long interdisciplinary programme financed by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, which analyses the social and economic consequences of the substantial “green” investments going into northern Sweden.

Thursday, November 21

18:00 The Dream of Green Industry: Part 2

Lecture by Arne Müller, freelance journalist and author, Ubmeje/Umeå. Respondent: Linda Wårell, Associate Professor in Economics, Luleå University of Technology.

The growing industries in northern Sweden have one thing in common: they all aim to contribute to a green transition built on sharply decreasing carbon dioxide emissions. While the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is both urgent and necessary, there are issues with the approach currently being taken in the north. An immense amount of electricity and minerals will be needed. Wind mill farms, high-voltage transmission lines, and new extraction mines will thus take over much of the land. This in turn heightens already existing tensions around land usage, in particular for those engaging in reindeer herding. Is it even possible to extract the amount of electricity and minerals needed? Will the new industries really contribute to an effective decrease in carbon dioxide emissions? Are there alternative approaches that reduce the need for electricity and finite natural resources?

Linda Wårell is an Associate Professor in Economics at the Luleå University of Technology. Her research and publications are primarily focused on natural resources, energy and environmental economics, and the competitive and socioeconomic consequences within these fields. When it comes to natural resources, Wårell has been involved in several research projects analyzing the development of international markets for minerals and metals, as well as the socioeconomic effects and land use conflicts around the mining industry. One example is her participation in the EU

project Minatura, which investigated the increasing competition around land use in Europe, with a focus on finding possible solutions for trade-offs between different interests. Wårell has also conducted research on energy markets, with the aim of finding solutions for a more sustainable approach. She has for example studied the role of district heating in the Swedish energy system, how biomass could be used in the future, and how households choose green transportation alternatives. Currently, Wårell is involved in a research project that analyses the potential of ports and their surrounding areas to scale up the use of liquid hydrogen within the energy system. In summary, her research is firmly rooted in the socioeconomic effects of industrial developments and the green transition that is currently underway in northern Sweden.

Thursday, December 12

18:00 How Is Reindeer Herding Affected by a Changing Climate?

Lecture by Gunhild Ninis Rosqvist, Professor in Geography at Stockholm University. Respondent: Matti Blind Berg, Chairman of the National Association of the Sámi People in Sweden.

A notable article published in the journal *Nature* last year showed that 85% of the surface area of the Cap of the North is being exploited for different kinds of economic activity. The competitive land use is currently hindering the adaptation of reindeer herding to increasingly complicated environmental conditions. Gunhild Ninis Rosqvist, who has spent much of her career studying the effects of climate change on the environment of northern Sweden, will be presenting her findings. She is currently working on a research project with the Swedish title "Att undvika den gröna

omställningens dilemma: Behovet av klimatkonsekvensanalyser för områden med renskötsel i Sápmi,” (Avoiding the Dilemma of the Green Transition: The Need for Impact Assessments for Areas with Reindeer Husbandry in Sápmi).

Gunhild Ninis Rosqvist is a Professor of Geography at Stockholm University, studying fell and Arctic regions. Her focus is on climate change and how it affects snow, ice, water, reindeer herding, and sustainable land use.

Thursday, January 9

18:00 How Is Reindeer Herding Affected by the Construction of Wind Farms?

Lecture by Per Sandström, Docent in Forest Resource Management at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.
Respondent: member of Gällivare Sámi Village.

New research has uncovered the effects of wind farming on reindeer. In Malå Sámi Village, where several wind farms have already been built and more are being planned, the migration patterns of reindeer have changed. The same goes for Gällivare Sámi Village, which will be affected when several large wind farms are built in its vicinity. In an article in the daily Dagens Nyheter, several researchers have concluded that there is clearly a discrepancy between the planned expansion of land-based wind mill farming in northern Sweden on the one hand and reindeer herding on the other.

“Ska vindkraften byggas ut måste samerna köras över”—DN.se.

Per Sandström (PhD) is an Associate Professor of Forestry Management at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Umeå. For the past twenty-five years, his research has focused on how different forms of land use affect reindeer, reindeer husbandry, and Sámi culture. Throughout his career, he has collaborated closely with Sámi villages to jointly produce knowledge. Since 2009, he has been working with a series of projects that have examined the effects of wind farms on reindeer husbandry.

Thursday, February 13

18:00 Reindeer Herding and the Mines: Why Are the Discrepancies So Large?

Representative from Jåhkågasska Sámi Village: Nils Johanas Allas; along with representatives from Talma Sámi Village: Lars Marcus Lilja Kuhmunen, Gabna Sámi Village. Respondent: Daniel Fjellborg, political science researcher at Luleå University of Technology.

There are many examples of mining projects that stand in conflict with reindeer herding in the north. The most drawn-out of these concerns Beowulf Minings' planned iron ore mine in Gallok, which was recently given the green light to proceed with its operations. Outside Vazáš/Vittangi, Talga Resources intends to construct several graphite mines, which may cut off parts of the winter pastures of Talma Sámi Village. The Sámi villages Gabna and Sarivuoma would also be affected by this. Yet another example is LKAB's plans for the Per Geijer deposit, which will cut off the last remaining passage for Gabna Sámi Village to Giron/Kiruna. Protests alongside other alternative acts of resistance are taking place everywhere, something investigated by Daniel Fjellborg in his recent thesis “Strategies and Actions in Swedish Mining Resistance.”

Daniel Fjellborg is a Doctor of Political Science. He recently presented his thesis, “Strategies and Actions in Swedish Mining Resistance” at Luleå University of Technology. The study maps resistance against the mining industry in Sweden over the past fifteen years, and the motives behind the growing protest movement that can be witnessed from Giron in the north all the way down south to Österlen. The findings show that opposition to mining projects tend to be based on a desire to promote other societal developments, such as environmental protection, agriculture or Sámi commerce. He also explores how the other societal actors can affect the development of mining conflicts through law-making, politics, and the actions of mining companies. Through his research, and having grown up in the Giron villages, he has experienced both the positive and negative aspects that active mines and new developments can bring to the local community. His current research focuses on how company-led mediation can affect local acceptance for, or resistance against, the industrial transition in the north.

Thursday, March 6

18:00 Where Are We Headed with the New Industries in the North?

Panel discussion with Hans Andersson, Regional Director of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise in Norrbotten County; Jan Anders Perdahl, Vänsterpartiet, Vice Chairman of the Regional Development Committee; Stefan Mikaelsson, Vice Chairman of the Sámi Parliament of Sweden; Hans Nilsson, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation in Giron/Kiruna.

The concluding panel discussion tackles major features of the ongoing developments. How will urban and rural areas be affected

by the large industrial projects? How will we meet the increasing demand for electricity and minerals? Can developments continue without augmenting the already existing conflicts around reindeer herding and land use? How will Norrbotten Country look in ten, fifty, and one hundred years given the current trends? Are there any alternative routes for development?

Upcoming events as part of the exhibition *In the Footsteps of the Stars—The Embroidered Worlds of Britta Marakatt-Labba* at Kin Museum of Contemporary Art in Kiruna

October 23, 2024—March 16, 2025

Guided exhibition tours, Wednesdays at 12:30 and Saturdays at 14:00. Meet-up at Kin’s green reception in the City Hall.

Thursday, October 24

18:00 Britta Marakatt-Labba in conversation with Kimberley Moulton

Kimberley Moulton is a Yorta Yorta First Nations woman from Australia. She is the Adjunct Curator of Indigenous Art at Tate Modern in London and Senior Curator of RISING Festival, Melbourne. She is a PhD Candidate in curatorial practice at the Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous Research Lab at Monash University, Melbourne; and Curator Emeritus at Museums Victoria.

Saturday, October 26

13:00 Guided Exhibition Tour with Britta Marakatt-Labba

Tuesday, October 29—Friday, November 1

12:00–16:00 Autumn Break Art Camp

This autumn break Art Camp will be focused on drawing, with workshops led by the Giron/Kiruna-based Sámi artist Inga-Wiktoria Páve. Over the course of four days, participants will learn how to draw their surroundings, exploring how one can make the hand imitate what the eye sees. The sketchbook, which the participants will work on together, will be an important tool here. The Art Camp is free, open to all ages, and no prior experience is necessary. Kin will provide coffee, tea, juices, and fruits.

Presentation of the participants' work on Friday, November 1, 15:00.

In the Art Workshop, floor 0.5

Saturday, November 16

15:00 Guided Exhibition Tour with Britta Marakatt-Labba

Sunday, November 17

13:00 Lecture with Aqui Thami, indigenous artist from the Himalayas and artist-in-residence at Kin during the autumn of 2024

Aqui Thami's work engages deeply with the dynamics of community, identity, and resistance and reflects a profound inquiry into the power of collective voices and the role of art in shaping social narratives. In this talk, she will navigate through her body of work that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, revealing how her projects have been developed and reimagined in diverse contexts. She will share insights from her ongoing residency at Kin, where her research fosters deep connections and exchange with the Sámi community. Her recent ceremonial interventions, radio practice, and films challenge us to reconsider the public's role in accountability and the negotiation of space, identity, memory, and healing.

Saturday, November 23

13:00 Thematic exhibition tour with Kin's staff

Saturday, December 14

12:00 Workshop with Leah Smith. More information to come, please check our website and social media for further information.

Sunday, December 15

13:00 Mázejuavku—The Sámi Artist Group. Lecture with Susanne Hætta

In 1978, eight young Sámi artists formed the Mázejoavku—The Sámi Artist Group. They were among the very first educated artists from

the Nordic countries' indigenous group, the Sámi. It felt urgent for them to “return home” after the completion of their art education, “home” being the Northern Sámi area where their roots come from. They formed a collective with workshops in the Sámi village of Máze/Masi. In times of increasing awareness and resistance to assimilation policies and discrimination, combined with struggles for self-government and land rights, the art of Mázejoavku played a crucial role—both for Sámi society, in shaping the majority's understanding of their struggles, and for other Indigenous peoples, who saw the Sámi's fighting spirit. During their five active years as a group, the Mázejoavku made an impact in the art world, with the members also playing important roles in the forming of Sámi art organizations..

Susanne Hætta (b. 1975) is a Sámi writer, curator, photographer, and artist. She lives in Čáhcesuolu/Vadsø on the Norwegian side of Sápmi. The main focus of her books are Sámi artists and Sámi society. As an artist, Hætta has expressed herself through photography, graphic prints and installations, often reflecting her identity connected to the landscapes of her family. As a member of Dáiddadállu—Sámi Artist Network in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, she was represented at Sámi Dáiddaguovddáš, the Sámi Center for Contemporary Art in Kárášjohka/Karasjok in the ten-year anniversary exhibition for Dáiddadállu. Hætta's books about the internationally renowned Sámi artists, Mari Boine and Synnøve Persen, drew attention to her photographic and written work. In 2020, she published the book about the pioneers in the Mázejoavku/The Sámi Artist Group from the late 1970s and early 80s. Her next two books are about Finnmarkseiendommen—Finnmárkkkuopmodat, the Finnmark Estate (2026), and sauna cultures in Norway (2025).

Thursday, January 2–Saturday, January 4

12:00–16:00 Homemade paper and paintbrushes: Art Camp at Kin during Christmas break 2025

During this Christmas break Art Camp, we will be creating our own paper and paintbrushes, taking inspiration from Britta Marakatt-Labba who reuses materials like flour bags in her work. When we paint, draw, and cut out shapes to bring our imagination to life, we often use white sheets of paper. But does paper really need to be white with straight edges? Does it even need to be totally flat? Like Marakatt-Labba, we will be working with the material's flaws and imperfections. Together, we will create pulp out of leftover bits of paper from Kin's Art Workshop and experiment with different shapes and coloring techniques. While the paper is drying, we will make our own paintbrushes with material also sourced from the Workshop. Can you paint with wire? How big can a paintbrush be? Do you even need to be able to hold it in your hand? When the paper is dry, we will test our paintbrushes on them! The Art Camp is led by artist Matilda Kenttä. It is free of charge, open to all ages and no prior knowledge is necessary. Coffee, tea, juices, and fruits will be provided by Kin.

Presentation of the participants' work on Sunday, January 5, at 13:00.

In the Art Workshop, floor 0.5

Saturday, January 11

13:00 Duodji and Sustainability: Lecture with Gunvor Guttorm

Gunvor Guttorm is a professor in *duodji*, Sámi handicraft, at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino.

In her lecture, she will be discussing *duodji* from a sustainability perspective. While much of *duodji* can be viewed as something culturally and economically sustainable, it also entails a sustainable lifestyle for those who practice it. How can *duodji* be viewed in the context of the so-called green transition? How do its practitioners position themselves within it? What can *duodji* and *dudjon* (the act of creating) offer the green transition?

Guttorm was born and raised in Kárášjohka/Karasjok and currently lives in Johkamohkki/Jokkmokk. She has been involved in sustainability issues since her youth, even though it may have gone under a different name back then. She has written a number of articles about what *duodji* and *duodjo* mean in the Sámi context, how it fits into the everyday and how it impacts people's well-being.

Thursday, January 23

18:00 Vi är fortfarande här/We are Still Here. Film screening at Aurora (tickets/membership purchased on site)

They packed a red bus full of pictures and drove around to give their art to their people. When a hydroelectric power plant in the Alta River threatened to flood the village Máze (Masi), they became an important part of the resistance. The artists in Mázejoavku had grown up in a society that tried to rid them of their family, their language and their culture. The time had come to re-write history.

Berit Marit Haetta, Hans Ragnar Mathisen, Synnøve Persen, Aage Gaup and Britta Marakatt-Labba. Directed by Gunilla Bresky. Premiere 2024. 79 minutes.

In collaboration with Kiruna filmstudio.

Saturday, January 25

13:00 Embroidery and Poetry: Britta Marakatt-Labba and Linnea Axelsson speak with Maria Lind about Sámi storytelling tradition and the challenges facing Sámi lifestyle and culture

Linnea Axelsson is a Swedish-Sámi poet and author born in Bårjås/ Porjus. She made her debut in 2010 with *Tvillingsmycket*. In 2018, she published the acclaimed epic novel *Ædnan*, which received several awards, including Augustpriset. In 2022 she published the novel *Magnificat*, and the poetry collection *Sjaunja* came out in 2024.

Tuesday, February 25–Friday, February 28

12:00–16:00 Personal Stories: Art Camp at Kin during the February half-term break 2025

During this Art Camp, participants will be working with different materials and techniques using the exhibition "In the Footsteps of the Stars—The Embroidered Worlds of Britta Marakatt-Labba" as a point of departure. Collages, drawings, or sculptures are made taking inspiration from the artist's use of color, shape, and materials. In focus are personal stories and memories. The Art Camp is led by artist Agneta Andersson. It is free of charge, open to all ages and no prior knowledge is necessary. Coffee, tea, juices, and fruits will be provided by Kin.

Presentation of the participants' work on Friday, February 28, 15:00

In the Art Workshop, floor 0.5

Saturday, March 8

13:00 Embroidery Workshop with Britta Marakatt-Labba

This is a unique opportunity to learn about the artists thorough knowledge of textiles. Materials will be provided. Participants are welcome to bring projects they might currently be working on. The number of places is limited, and pre-registration is required. Contact emma.pettersson.juntti@kinmuseum.se to register.

Sunday, March 16

13:00 The final day of the exhibition and the last chance that guided tours will be offered

Britta Marakatt-Labba around Norrbotten County

Several works by Britta Marakatt-Labba can be viewed all year round in Váhtjer/Jiellevárre/Gällivare, Johkamohkki/Jokkmokk and Julevu/Luleå. Kin is highlighting this by offering guided tours to experience the works in situ.

Váhtjer/Jiellevárre/Gällivare

Saturday, February 1

13:00 at Folkets Hus and Kunskapshuset

In Váhtjer/Jiellevárre/Gällivare some unusual artworks are on view, ones that employ fish scales as a medium as well as a new public artwork at Kunskapshuset. As a part of the Polar Winter Night programme, in collaboration with Folkets Hus och Parker and Gällivare Municipality.

Johkamohkki/Jokkmokk

Saturday, February 8

10:00 Ájtte Museum in Jokkmokk

A curtain in the auditorium, embroidered works, and baptism cloths can all be viewed at the museum. There are more works on display at the Sámi School, the health center and the municipal house. The tour is part of Jokkmokk market, in collaboration with Ájtte. Tickets are priced at 60 SEK and can be bought on the same day from the reception at Ájtte.

Julevu/Luleå

Sunday, February 23

14:30 Meet-up outside Patienthotell Vistet at Sunderby Hospital

A visit to Björkskatan Health Center will follow. Here, embroideries created between circa 1990 to 2010 are on exhibit. In collaboration with Norrbotten Region. Pre-register by contacting Silvia Colombo: silvia.colombo@norrbotten.se

Colophon

Kin Museum of Contemporary Art, Kristallen City Hall,
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Staff

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Märta Öringe, collection and mediation

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Rickard Nutti, economic administration

Carola Kalla, intern

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Viveka Englander, Emma Dettle, Ivar Vrijman, Tova Söderberg and

Alla Belova

Graphics: Marina Sergeeva

Installation: Justin O'Shaughnessy, Jude O'Shaughnessy

Kin's visual dialect has been developed by the artists Inga-Wiktoria
Påve and Fredrik Prost in collaboration with the designers Johanna
Lewengard and Benedetta Crippa.

In the Footsteps of the Stars—

The Embroidered Worlds of Britta Marakatt-Labba

October 23, 2024—March 16, 2025

The exhibition was initiated by The National Museum of Art,
Architecture and Design in Oslo, where it was shown March 15—
August 25, 2024, and was carried out in collaboration with Kin
Museum of Contemporary Art and Modern Museet in Stockholm.
The exhibition shown at Kin is a reworked version with the
title *In the Footsteps of the Stars—The Embroidered Worlds of Britta
Marakatt-Labba*.

Kin Museum of Contemporary Art is the regional art museum
of Norrbotten, founded in 2018 by the region and the Municipality
of Kiruna.

