



The Living Room— An Installation by Katarina Spik Skum

February 13—December 31, 2025

Kin Museum of Contemporary Art
in Giron/Kiruna

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Reindeer hide bean bags, cotton drapes with Sámi patterns, wooden tables that have kept the branches' organic forms, and rákkas, mosquito tents made of thin material. This Sámi alternative to interior design is what welcomes visitors in the installation at Kin. It was created by the artist and duojár (Sámi craftsperson) Katarina Spik Skum. The installation continues in Kin's Art Workshop and together different parts create a welcoming environment where there's plenty of space to sit down, converse and create.

With a great deal of skill and material sensibility, Spik Skum creates works to live with, often in collaboration with other *duojárat* (Sámi craftspeople) and artists. Bringing *duodji* (Sámi craft) to new spaces means weaving together arts and crafts with roots in the Lule Sámi region. She takes inspiration from life in the *goahti* (Sámi tent), where she spent time with her mother's family during her childhood summers, while also allowing contemporary materials and forms to seep into the designs. She is based in Jåhkåmåhkke/Jokkmokk and has a master's degree in *duodji* from Sámi allaskuvla in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino. Since the beginning of the 2010s she has participated in several exhibitions in Jåhkåmåhkke, Árjepluovve/Arjeplog, Julevu/Luleå, Kárášjohka/Karasjok, Bådåddjo/Bodö, Stockholm, and Toronto. Her works are included in numerous public art collections.

Katarina Spik Skum participated in the 2023 Venice Biennale of Architecture together with the architect and artist Joar Nango, and his project Girjegumpi, a mobile and constantly changing library about Sámi culture and architecture. She has also been at Sápmi Salasta, a residency for indigenous peoples in Lusspie/Storuman. Her work has been awarded with a working grant from Sámi Duodji, in memory of Asa Kitok, as well as the Gannevik Stipend for design.

Katarina Spik Skum in conversation with Maria Lind, director of Kin Museum of Contemporary Art

Maria Lind: How would you describe your work exhibited at Kin, which was previously shown at the stand in the Gothenburg Book Fair, where Tjållegoahte Authors' Centre has been asked to represent Sápmi?

Katarina Spik Skum: It is a space for conversation where you can sit down and feel the presence of Sámi culture. I wanted it to be inviting to visitors who have come to listen to talks and performances on stage. Many of the textiles feature patterns from my own *duodji* practice, which have been produced with the help of Bäck Design.

ML: How do you work with materials, colors, and shapes?

KSS: I try to mix different, mostly natural, materials. I tan the hides myself, and for this display I have sewn bean bags out of them. Since a few years back I have been working together with Kristoffer Unga-Pirak, a *duojár* and carpenter. This collaboration has resulted in wooden installations. I gather wood from the area, prepare it, and then get help assembling it into, for example, a table or room divider.

Lule Sámi culture, which is my Sámi heritage, touches everything that I make. Broadcloth is usually the basis for most of our textile work, but I use a lot of cotton materials. This is the case when I make *rákkas*, Sámi sleeping tents, which are used in the winters to keep in the heat and in the summers to protect against mosquitoes. This is something that has fascinated me for quite some time. A lot of my inspiration comes from spending time in the *goahti* tent with my maternal grandparents, my uncle, mother and aunt's family.

At the book fair I presented several pieces that I have created, all which date back to 2015, when I completed my master's degree. The drapes that I mentioned were originally created as a public artwork for Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino School. For that project, I made three pieces that all relate to the necessities of a home, which in my opinion are three things: people, animals—from which the Sámi people depend on for food—and nature. This is the fundamental philosophy that I have continued to work with. And the feeling of living in a *goahti* tent is where the textiles come in.

ML: Can you tell us about the work you did for your master's degree?

KSS: It was a master's degree in *duodji* and design, so Sámi craft and design, at Sámi allaskuvla in Guovdageaidnu. We were the first class of students to do that degree. My final piece was titled *My Room: An Alternative to Interior Design Inspired by Life in the Goahti*. I wanted to move away from the furniture and interiors of the western world, and instead create furniture based on memories and photographs from my maternal grandmother and grandfather's home. I created spaces for sleeping and for sitting, tables, hanging décor, etc. Even though I've had my own home for some time now, and I've bought many things made by other Sámi designers such as glassware, ceramics, and curtains, I felt like something was missing. So, I presented an alternative: how one can create a home built entirely upon Sámi traditions.

This idea builds upon the theory and practice of the Indonesian designer and professor Adhi Nugraha. He believes that it is possible to take part of one culture and transform it into something else. Today we live differently than to how our forefathers and foremothers did, but it is possible to keep living with our traditions. It is thanks to him that I understood how buildings can be included

in that transformation, which is how I got stuck on the *goahti*. I wanted to use elements of the tent's wooden structure, even though I had not worked with wood since woodwork in primary school. My family had many peat *goahti* and I used to lie down and study them. I selected my favourite *goahti* based on which had the most beautiful woodwork, with broad, straight planks of wood. But in my exam piece I ended up using knobbly pieces of dwarf birch!

Something happened to my creative process when I was at school. I expanded my practice and went beyond what I had been doing before, traditional dress details and such things. I started working with and exploring the space more, mixing traditional and new materials in a different way after the degree.

ML: You mentioned that your cultural background is Lule Sámi. What characterizes this style of Sámi *duodji*?

KSS: While it is difficult to categorize, I suppose one could say that Lule Sámi design is quite stripped back. The color palette primarily consists of red, yellow, and blue; red, blue, and green, or red, green, and blue. We use a lot of tin pewter wire, which I like. If you compare the Lule Sámi visual language to that of other areas, we traditionally use rounder forms. Zig-zags don't have to be totally pointy but can be more wave-like. We use softer lines with the tin, and at the same time, it's all very simple. Our traditional *gákti* dress consists solely of broadcloth, for instance. Of course, it can be embroidered, and we did do so during certain periods. At times we have been bolder, adding extra ribbons and sewing on polyester bands. Overall though, we hold back quite a bit.

ML: Why do you think that is—that you are somewhat stricter compared to other traditions?

KSS: There are many reasons as to why. It partly has to do with our geographical location, and the fact that we stopped moving to Norway in the summers. Our area back then was along the big Lule River, where trade contacts and exchanges with Julevu/Luleå were not as established. This was not the case for those in Northern Sápmi who moved with their reindeer to the sea on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, where people have traded wares for hundreds of years. We used to do this, but at some point, during the Second World War we stopped moving our reindeer to the Norwegian side.

Another reason is that the influences of Laestadianism continue to live on. This is the case in many other Northern Sámi areas, but it seems to have influenced us far more. For some time, the use of tin pewter wires was considered gaudy, and it was not used at all. Only white leather and broadcloth decorated the collar of the dress. If you go back several hundreds of years though, we wore headbands and collars with twenty meters worth of tin wire. Other clothes were also decorated lavishly with it. This is a recognizable marker, that a lot of tin wire was taken away from the Lule Sámi area. When I grew up there was less wire use than today. But now, many people have taken up the kind of crafting they see at museums, such as the early *duodji* that uses a lot of tin wire.

ML: Could you describe how you gather your materials, from start to finish? The tin wire and hides, and the textiles that you use.

KSS: Like many other *duojárat* I purchase the wire from a Sámi man who produces it. Back in the day, you would do this whole process yourself: pull the molten tin through a sheet made of horn, spin it on sewing thread and then sew with the tin-coated thread. I buy the reindeer hides in the area and dehair them myself by staging a rotting process that scrapes off the membranes. After that I cook the hides together with tree bark. This makes the skins brown and

more sustainable, and they can withstand dirt better. If I want white skins, I work in a bit of lard into the skin. It used to be common to use white skins, and while it has disappeared in many Sámi areas, the practice has remained in mine. We decorate with white and brown hides next to one another, and we also have the traditional leather *gakti* dress. We never stopped wearing that. It has not become a museum object but has grown from being something worn on a daily basis to being the most exclusive *gakti* one can own. I gather the wood from the area around Jåhkåmåhkke as well from out on the fells. I scrape the bark off the wood and dry it off. Then Kristoffer Unga-Pirak helps me to polish the sticks—oiling and assembling them.

ML: The hide tanning process seems to be very complicated. Where can you do it yourself?

KSS: During the winters I do it in my garage. My grandmother used to do it on the fells when we were children. When we moved up in the beginning of June she laid the skins in the river, where they were dehaired. Then we cooked the bark in Salto/Saltoluokta and went through that process there. When we moved even further north, to Badjelánnda/Padjelanta National Park, she brought the skins with her. There she softened the hides and laid them out in the sun to give them the right colour. Now I do it in my backyard during the summer. It's ideal to do it in the summer or autumn when you can be outdoors.

ML: One feature in your design in the installation are the drapes hanging from the ceiling. Can you tell us something about them?

KSS: The drapes are made of cotton and feature small details from the Lule Sámi dress that have been enlarged. For example, there are the braids that are used to tie together the dress and bags, and the decorated

shoe bands made of rough wool. These are all details from Lule Sámi culture. I don't sew things from the other areas but stick to my own.

ML: You chose a green carpet for the floor of the stand at the Gothenburg Book Fair, and as you mentioned it is important that the space is open to conversation and exchange. They were small stations away from the stage where people could sit or stand and talk. For this aspect we collaborated with Röhsska Museum for design, fashion, and craft, who lent us their furniture. I'm curious as to where you stand on interior design, design, craft, handicraft, and art. Are these categorizations important to you, and in that case, where do you place your work?

KSS: If I am working on a traditional dress for a private customer I prefer to stick to traditional crafting methods. But while there are *duojár* who repeatedly produce the same collar—and there is nothing wrong with that—I change it up a bit every time. I never do the exact same thing twice. This might be the influence that handicraft and art has had on me.

ML: Every item is unique just as they build as well on tradition.

KSS: That's exactly it. For me, it is liberating to be able to move between the categories craft and art. Sometimes I collaborate with other artists and crafters, and I leave the stricter traditions behind. This means that my work is fun and varied. It is motivating to be able to cross boundaries without having to officially state that this is a work of art, and this is a work of craft. I never categorise them like that myself, but maybe I do it subconsciously to differentiate between them.

In any case it is great fun, and I am learning a lot. This is probably why I felt encouraged to work with the *duojár* and architect Johanna Minde as well as with Joar Nango. I try something new every time.

It is easy to develop when you get to leave traditional methods behind and make, for example, a public artwork on a large scale. In this way, even the traditions themselves develop.

ML: The objects you made for the Gothenburg Book fair Kin Museum has acquired to its collection. We will be using the furniture and other objects straight away, primarily for things like artist talks and lectures. In this way we are also following the *duodji* tradition, by using the objects.

KSS: It is so great that they are going to be used. Otherwise, artworks can easily end up in the collection archive. I am transforming *duodji* and working to bring these works to new arenas. The Book Fair and Kin are such new and unexpected places.

The conversation took place before Gothenburg Book Fair where Sápmi was the guest of honor. Tjállegoahte Author's Centre invited Katarina Spik Skum and Kin to furnish Tjállegoahte's stand 26-29 September 2024.

Wednesday, February 12

Duodji as an Alternative to Home Décor— Katarina Spik Skum Exhibits at Samegården

18:00 Opening. The artist will be present.

Katarina Spik Skum will be exhibiting her work at the Sámi Museum at Samegården. Drawing from the Lule Sámi tradition and inspired by her childhood experiences spent with her mother's family in a tipi, Spik Skum has created a variety of textiles, pillows, banners, and other items. It is about *duodji*, Sámi craft, as an alternative to home décor.

Spik Skum lives and works in Jåhkåmåhkke/Jokkmokk and has a master's degree in duodji from Sámi allaskuvla in Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino.

The exhibition will run from February 12–December 31, 2025, and is open weekly from 9:00–15:00, Monday–Friday.

The museum situated at Samegården is administered by the Kiruna Sámi Association and is located on the ground floor of Samegården at Brytaregatan 14, 981 34 Kiruna.

The exhibition is part of Katarina Spik Skum's exhibition *The Living Room—An Installation by Katarina Spik Skum* at Kin Museum of Contemporary Art. It is a collaboration between Kiruna Sámi Association and Kin.

Address: Stadshustorget 1, 98130 Kiruna
The exhibition at Kin opens Thursday 13 February, 16:00.

Thursday, 13 February

16:00 Floor 1, Art Workshop. Opening of the exhibition with an introduction by the artist.

During 2025 the artist Katarina Spik Skum will hold introductions and talk about the exhibition. Visit Kin's webiste and social media for updates on dates.

The Living Room—An Installation by Katarina Spik Skum is part *The Hand, the Heart and the Brain and Women in the North*. Two multi year thematic threads at Kin.

Colophon

Address: Stadshustorget 1, 98130 Kiruna

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Museum hosts: Alla Belova, Emma Dettle, Viveka Englander, Lloyd

Jarlemyr, Lena Rydström, Tova Söderberg and Ivar Vrijman

Marina Sergeeva, graphic design

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

Special thanks from the artist:

Thank you Kristoffer Unga Pirak, Emmelie Stuge, Mikael Pirak, Joar Nango, Johanna Minde and my family. Thank you Tjållegoahte and Kin Museum of Contemporary Art for the trust.

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

Kin Museum för samtidskonst/dáládáidaga dávvirvuorká/nykyaijan
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