

SLAVOIK – EXPLORATION OF TRANSCULTURAL ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

On the example of Sámi and Slavic cultures

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Master's thesis

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Beautiful lands on which to live,

voya voya nana nana

You are so beautiful that you sparkle.

~Johan Turi (*On account of Sámi*, 1910, p. 73)

Contents

1. Introduction	6
1.1. The elements of self-exploration.....	6
1.2. The <i>SLAVOIK</i> journey	10
2. On ethical issues, cultural appropriation and interactions of cultures.....	12
2.1. Ethical issues when working with Sámi <i>duodji</i>	12
2.2. Cultural appropriation	14
2.3. Cultural appropriation – examples in and outside of the Sámi context	18
2.4. Inter- and transculturalism	21
2.5. Migration and art.....	22
3. Methods: cultural immersion, arts based and artistic research.....	24
3.1. Arts based research.....	24
3.2. Artistic research.....	28
3.3. Cultural immersion as a method of reflection.....	30
4. <i>SLAVOIK</i> – finding the transcultural through artistic research.....	32
5. Traineeship at Sámi Archives as cultural immersion	64
6. Addressing the questions	66
6.1. Was <i>SLAVOIK</i> ethical?	66
6.2. Was <i>SLAVOIK</i> culturally appropriative?	68
6.3. Was <i>SLAVOIK</i> inter- or transcultural?.....	69
6.4. Immigrant art – personal standpoint.....	71
7. Conclusions	73
References.....	76

Table of figures

Figure 1 Artistic reasearch practice (Hannula, 2014, p. 18).	29
Figure 2 Poster advertising exhibition. misia siennicka, 2021.	32
Figure 3 An attachment to the exhibition space application. misia siennicka, 19.10.2020.	34
Figure 4 Swarzyca (on the left), Sámi sun symbol (on the right)	35
Figure 5 An idea I was advised not to pursuit. misia siennicka, 2021.....	36
Figure 6 Rainbow heptptych. misia siennicka, 2021.	37
Figure 7 Gilbert Baker's design of LGBT flag from 1978, nowadays referred to as Retro 8.....	38
Figure 8 <i>Pink</i> ; 1st of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	39
Figure 9 Detail of <i>Pink</i> ; 1st of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	40
Figure 10 <i>Red</i> ; 2nd of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	42
Figure 11 Detail of <i>Red</i> ; 2st of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	43
Figure 12 <i>Orange</i> ; 3rd of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	45
Figure 13 Detail of <i>Orange</i> ; 3rd of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	46
Figure 14 <i>Yellow</i> ; 4th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	48
Figure 15 Detail of <i>Yellow</i> ; 4th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	49
Figure 16 <i>Green</i> ; 5th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	51
Figure 17 Detail of <i>Green</i> ; 5th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	52
Figure 18 <i>Blue</i> ; 6th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	54
Figure 19 Detail of <i>Blue</i> ; 6th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	55
Figure 20 <i>Purple</i> ; 7th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	57
Figure 21 Detail of <i>Purple</i> ; 7th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	58
Figure 22 <i>Grey</i> ; bike – the main piece. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.....	60
Figure 23 The "sources" wall of the exhibition. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.	62
Figure 24 Hanging the exhibition. Photo: Alina Korotovskaia, 2021.	63

Table of appendixes

Appendix 1 <i>Reference list for the artworks</i>	83
Appendix 2 <i>Traineeship report: Sámi Archives, Arctic Indigenous Design Archives</i>	90

Abstract

Art has always been known to transcend national borders; in times of constant migration transculturalism is becoming an increasingly common occurrence in artistic expression. Should cultural belonging define the motifs, style, and topics of one's art? The presented study is an artistic journey to finding out how far the self-expression can stretch. Through artistic research, Sámi and Slavic weaving patterns were merged into a singular hybrid universe. It has resulted in the exhibition – *SLAVOIK*, which took place in March 2021, and was later evaluated in the process of cultural immersion. The artistic process has been placed within an ethical grey area, due to its potential of being appropriative of Sámi culture. This led to the development of culturally sensitive ways of engaging in cross-cultural art projects. The research takes into account the ethics of working with Indigenous cultures, cultural appropriation, and the concepts of interaction of cultures: inter- and transculturalism, all from the perspective of a newcomer to Lapland.

1. Introduction

1.1. The elements of self-exploration

This thesis is a report of self-exploration in a cultural context; a self-exploration that is meant to challenge the preconceptions of how artistic inspiration is impacted by the culture lived in, especially when not being native to the culture. This exploration is also of finding oneself as an immigrant in a culturally rich place, and not only finding paths between the “culture of origin” and the “new culture”, but merging them both into one homogenous space. This journey accounts for several different factors, which I would like to introduce now:

The Arctic. By description: a geographic region spreading around the North Pole; there is no single correct definition of the region as the southern boundary varies; based on temperature, the monthly average temperature in the Arctic is below + 10 ° C throughout the year, even in summer; culturally defined, the Arctic covers the homelands of northern Indigenous peoples (Arctic Centre, n.d., no page number). In practice: a fascinating place, mesmerising with its ever-changing landscapes, seasons, colours, which are, thanks to being very sparsely populated, so attainable, and so easy to access. Perhaps the harsh weather conditions, and the downsides that come with it, have impacted the numbers of people who decided to reside in these areas. But only when living here one starts to cherish the little gifts of nature, that elsewhere would be taken for granted: the warming rays of sun on the face, the smell of nature coming to life after being frozen for six to nine months, the cold day which forces one to stay inside, appreciate the warmth of the inside, the warm summer day that lasts for two months, the song of a bird returning to continue its lineage here, equally mesmerised by this place, the ice cold water of the lake, the sound of ice floes jingling whilst hitting against one another during the spring defrosting, the countless forms of ice and snow which cannot be observed anywhere else. These lands have been populated for centuries, or even millennia, by Indigenous peoples. The “European” part of the Arctic can be referred to as Sápmi, the Land of Sámi people, who have lived within, and together with this harsh nature. This place is not only entrancing with its picturesqueness, but also filled with gorgeous culture. It is the place where I have felt at home the most.

The home. The place where I sprouted. Lower Silesia. By definition: home to a variety of architectural marvels (including Książ, Poland third largest castle) Lower Silesia also boasts mountains, two national parks (Karkonosze and Sowie Mountains), many mountain resorts and the greatest number of health spas in Poland; dig a little deeper and you'll also find two UNESCO-listed sites (the Churches of Peace in Jawor and Świdnica, and the Centennial Hall in Wrocław), as well as the bustling regional capital, Wrocław (Polska: Polish Tourism Organization, n.d., no page number). In practice: a place filled with history, taken from one nation's hand to another, occupied, reoccupied, stolen, regained, swallowed, spat out, and deprived of the folk traditions still so vivid in the other parts of the country. The charm of the place does not only consist of historical buildings at every step of the way. It also has versatile landscapes, mountains, hills, planes, dark forests, leafy trees, evergreens, bright meadows. Primarily though – fields: rapeseed, wheat, and others, turning the areas into chequered carpets of different colours throughout the year; with a patchwork of towns, villages, and cities. Together they form the place of my upbringing, where, while living in the suburbia of a small town, I got to explore both urban and natural attractions of the place. The place of familiarity: of places, of people, and of the environment.

The self. Myself. By definition: a polish person, born in 1995, graduate of maths and physics class in high school, master of architecture, aspiring master of arts, music enthusiast, nature lover, people person. In practice: a seeker of self, from within and without, explorer of new, a resident of the unknown, feels at home after approximately 72 hours spent in a place, but has never felt as integral as when living in Sápmi. At some point in my life I heard a calling from within, that dared me to go north, and so I followed. The calling led me through many places, first on an Erasmus exchange to Oulu, and then further up north, to Rovaniemi where I heard *it* for the first time. I heard *yoik*.

The *yoik*. By definition: monophonic vocal music, traditional form of Sámi music; traditionally repetition of two or more phrases; few words in number, highly figurative (Kulonen et al., 2005, p. 46). In practice: to me personally – a calling . A calling to explore. A calling to learn. A calling to follow. It started with just listening, and dreaming of coming back, and seeking the North. For the past three years *yoik* has been part of my life, through good and bad, it has been my main

drive, my inspiration, and it has been the fascination of mine. It led me places, and inspired my projects, art, and jobs.

The chase of *yoik*. No definition available. In practice: the strong desire to follow the familiarity in the newly found sound, and finding it strongly connected to the previously explored traditional sound of Slavic white voice.

The influence. By definition: affect or change how someone or something develops, behaves, or thinks (Cambridge dictionary, n.d., no page number). In practice: the driving force shaping the self, strengthening the values and beliefs, impacting the thought processes and with it the process of creating. It comes from everything, everywhere, and everybody. I feel, and these feelings are supported by research, that anything I interact with changes me. Every piece of art seen (Jensen, 2001; Leavy, 2018, p. 3), every person met (Balboa & Glaser, 2019), every book read, every song heard, and every experience lived (Griffiths, 2011, pp. 167–168) gives me new perspectives. It polarises my views and gives me a better understanding of who I am (Griffiths, 2011, pp. 167–168), it may scar me, but it can also make me a better person. Sometimes though, it affects another part of me, the part of me that I call home. This part of me responded when I heard the *yoik* for the first time, when I started learning about Sámi craft, and finally when I lived in Anár (Inari) – the Sámi cultural centre of Finnish Sápmi.

The Sámi. By definition: living in the northern parts of Scandinavia and Finland and in the Kola Peninsula, are the only Indigenous people in the EU to have their own language, culture, means of livelihood and identity; the history of the Sámi in the areas occupied by them dates far back to before the formation of the present states in the region; Sápmi, the present area settled by the Sámi, extends from central Norway and Sweden through the northernmost parts of Finland and Norway to Kola Peninsula in Russian Federation; this region is approximately 300,000–400,000 square kilometres in area; at present (2005), a survey carried out by the Sámi Parliament of Finland estimates that over 45,000 Sámi live in Norway, some 20,000 in Sweden, 2000 in Russia and approximately 8000 in Finland (Kulonen et.al., 2005, p. 5). In practice: friends, co-workers, great artists, crafts makers, musicians, people from whom I learned a lot, people who have been cultivating and trying to keep their traditional culture alive, something which I have not experienced in my area – Lower Silesia. Contrary to dominant cultures, like in Lower Silesia, where being interested in folklore is treated as a fad, a very niche hobby, rather than an important part

of preserving the culture, Sámi people grow up to cultivate and respect their old traditions. In dominant cultures the traditions that seem to be cherished the most are the ones which bring profit to “somebody”, those that might be sold, and those that further perpetuate consumerism. Hardly anybody is interested in learning traditional singing techniques, like traditional Slavic white voice, learning the songs, or learning the rituals around it. There are still parts of Poland, that still pride themselves with keeping the traditions alive (Highlands for instance), where grandmas teach their grandchildren songs, where traditional clothing is not used as a costume but part of the identity. Unfortunately this is not the experience that I have grown up with. This is the part of Sámi culture that I admire the most – appreciating the traditions.

The Arctic Art and Design Master Programme. By definition: The Arctic Art and Design master’s programme has been developed to respond to the changing role of the creative professional in society; the content is designed to harness the potential of service design and applied visual arts in social, community or business contexts; service design and applied visual arts are used by our students to work with clients and community groups to identify problems and create solutions – it’s creative collaboration (University of Lapland, n.d., no page number). In practice: a pretext to explore the self in the other, a perfect space for learning and challenging the boundaries of what is seen as fine, and what is deemed inappropriate, what is commonly practiced, and what is to be avoided. The variety of courses and topics discussed in the program has impacted the way I perceive, and the way I create. I was challenged to experiment with new techniques, to explore new topics, and to submerge myself in the Arctic. It is also the reason why I am here, it helped me understand my relationship with nature, and creating, and to understand what I want and need in my life.

The Project. *SLAVOIK* (Slavic + *yoik*). No definition available. In practice: a self-exploratory process of identity change in a new place, with new influences, over time. The project started after meeting Ante Aikio, the *yoiker*, who pointed out a similarity he noticed between his shoelace – *nuvttohat’s vuoddagat* and Belarusian *krajka* – both of which are types of weaved belts. It was a journey of finding familiarity in the new, self in the Arctic, and the homeland in self. It was a fearful walk on the line between cultural appropriation and harmless inspiration. It was a learning curve, and an emotional experience.

1.2. The *SLAVOIK* journey

The components of impression: the Arctic, the home, the self, the *yoik*, and thereof chase, the influence, the Sámi, the Arctic Art and Design program, and the *SLAVOIK* project account for the experience that was ignited at the beginning of my studies at University of Lapland. I quickly found a chance to learn about the *yoik* for one of the courses, and the deeper I went with studying it, the more my fascination for it grew.

Having briefly explored my interest in Sámi culture, and acknowledging the appreciation to this new, yet surprising familiarity of it, I decided to engage with it as my thesis research. Deciding to undertake a topic related to the *yoik* for my thesis was a “no-brainer”. I was not sure of the course that the project could take, and treating this particular culture as an example proved itself to be difficult for an outsider. I have acknowledged that working with Indigenous knowledge, as a foreign artist, is walking on the thin line between cultural appropriation and inevitable artistic inspiration.

The presented research therefore explores the grey area of artistic practices. The research is meant to show culturally sensitive ways in which inter- or transcultural artistic processes ought to be handled, and start a conversation about whether or not cultural outsiders, immigrants, or newcomers should be given a pass on inspirations taken from the culture. To help with these issues the following questions have been kept in mind throughout the course of the research:

1. How can an artist, who is an outsider to a culture, use the new inspiration in a culturally sensitive manner?
2. Where lies the line between artistic inspiration and cultural appropriation? When does art become trans/intercultural?

Working with the Indigenous culture is a danger of committing cultural appropriation. As my fascination with the Sámi culture grew, so did the understanding that I cannot go into the research without a proper ethical understanding. Part of that understanding is acknowledging the position in which I stand with the Sámi culture.

Submerging myself in the Sámi culture, and especially when living in Sápmi – Sámi homeland, I found it impossible not to be influenced by the sounds, ways, and landscapes, and I know that there are others who feel the same. I did not start as a blank canvas, years of experience have al-

ready shaped the ways in which I think, and create, and these ways are expanding every time I interact with something new. I do not treat Sámi culture as my subject; I treat it as an example of a culture that has affected my processes, like Icelandic music when I was a teenager or Slavic folk music when I was a bit older. It also happens to be a perfect example since I had to consider more ethical issues than I would have when facing a “majority” culture.

Nonetheless I am aware of the position in which I stand. I am an outsider. I am a white person. I am also an immigrant, a student, an artist, and in the context of this thesis – a researcher. Academically it is a position of power – as a researcher, treating Sámi culture as one of their examples. But the Sámi culture is so much more than I could ever comprehend, so I stand humbly, not touching the areas in which I have no saying. I do not claim to make Sámi art, I do not claim to be an expert on Sámi issues, nor do I claim that what I do is universally acceptable. I research the artistic influence that Sámi culture has had personally on me, and I try to do it in a way, which will hopefully be seen as inoffensive, if not valuable. I find it important to disclose my personal position in this research, since art is the research method of mine, and all art created is filtered by the self, present and changing at all times. In arts based research self is unavoidable, and all of arts based research is political (Barone & Eisner, 2012, pp. 121–136).

The topic of this thesis is becoming increasingly common as the world is opening up, and moving and changing places of residence becomes easier. Getting first-hand experience with new cultures has never been more effortless, and art has become more accessible through the Internet, websites, and publications. That is the reason why I, an immigrant in the Arctic, decided to experiment with artistic expression, and how it is influenced by new inspiration, stimuli, landscape, environment, society, and culture. Aware of the ethical issues, I took a journey out, within, and outwards again, to create a hybrid of cultures that have had the biggest influence on me.

2. On ethical issues, cultural appropriation and interactions of cultures

2.1. Ethical issues when working with Sámi *duodji*

The openness and accessibility to different cultures in the modern world, makes it very easy to work with different cultures. While doing so, ethical issues may arise, especially when the culture in question is a minority and/or an Indigenous one. Researchers of various fields, even when coming from within the community, address ethical issues at the beginnings of their works.

Examples of such an effort may be seen in the work of Rovaniemi based British researcher Francis Joy in his Doctoral Thesis on Sámi Shamanism (Joy, 2018). Joy (2018) notes that it is crucial for an “outside” researcher to keep in mind the historical context – colonialism, and the direct results of it – discrimination, as the history influences the ways in which the research can be performed and will be perceived. In his ethical theory chapter Joy frequently refers to a great Sámi research duo – Gunvor Guttorm and Jelena Porsanger (Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011). Despite being members of Sámi community, each of their publications starts off with a thorough discourse about ethical guidelines, which shows the importance of such clarification.

The main reason behind creating guidelines for Indigenous research, or research involving Indigenous knowledge, is protecting the said culture from exploitation, which is especially important when considering a minority culture (Nordin Jonsson, 2011). Such guidelines may come from within or from the outside of the culture, and should be respected either way. They tend to be established by Indigenous researchers and communities and later reinforced by organisations like the United Nations, the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education, or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011). Historically Indigenous communities have not been benefiting from the data collection and research conducted on them (Nordin Jonsson, 2011). The reason for that may be that the colonialist approach to native nations, and the lack of humanity in viewing them has led to how cultural majorities have been the ones to run studies on the colonised communities, rather than in cooperation with them (Kuokkanen, 2008). This tendency spiked the need for developing such guidelines in the first place (Nordin Jonsson, 2011). Guttorm (2011) presents the idea of traditional knowledge as the context of survival and community building. Traditional knowledge, ultimately, links the past

with present, so preserving and documenting it, allows it to link with the future (Nordin Jonsson, 2011).

As there are many Indigenous communities, which create their own ethical guidelines for the researchers to follow, there are many different notions of carrying them. Porsanger and Guttorm (2011) suggest changing the ways in which data and artefacts are being collected to so-called – Indigenous methodologies. Their basic premises are to use Indigenous concepts, knowledge, and experiences in knowledge building, theorising, and argumentation, crediting knowledge holders and/or communities, and showing internal diversity of the culture (Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011). These may include simple actions like introducing native words in the research report, since many of them may not be easily described in other languages (Nordin Jonsson, 2011), but also addressing ethical and legal issues, communication with communities, connection with local identities, social structures, traditional concepts, and creation of information systems in the methodology (Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011). The last method has visualised Indigenous information system during the 2011 *Árbediehtu* project, as an idea for the future, which can now be observed as coming true with the launch of *Nuohtti* portal during *Indigenous Archives Today and Tomorrow* conference in 2021.

Except for the guidelines coming directly from the Sámi community (Nordin Jonsson, 2011; Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011), it is important to take a look at the guidelines that are being set by other Indigenous nations. Rauna Kuokkanen has broadly described those during the 2008 seminar *Ethics in Sámi and Indigenous Research*. A very common ethical practice when gathering any type of data, and especially traditional knowledge is free and prior informed consent and crediting the rightful knowledge carrier and/or community from which the piece of information has been retrieved. It is important to remember that the knowledge bearer should agree to have or not have their name mentioned in the final report (Nordin Jonsson, 2011, Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011, Kuokkanen, 2008). Mi'kmaq First Nation together with the support of the Canadian Government, except for ensuring the existence of free and prior informed consent, makes sure that any research regarding traditional information includes and amplifies the voices from within the community (Kuokkanen, 2008). This is possible through a variety of basic principles like acknowledging that: Indigenous people are guardians and interpreters of their own culture throughout the timeline; the culture is closely connected with the land, districts, and territories; Indige-

nous people have the right and obligation to control and protect their cultural and intellectual heritage; Indigenous knowledge is collectively owned, therefore the permission for its use should be collectively given, each community controls their own knowledge, and negotiates levels of authority over it (Kuokkanen, 2008). On top of that, Mi'kmaq guidelines also require Indigenous research participants to be considered equals, not informants, and similarly to Nordin Jonsson's (2011) guidelines address the need of using the local language in communication with community members (Kuokkanen, 2008; Nordin Jonsson, 2011). Their rules also include the right to voice any concerns about the results, debate on them, and have one's own perspective put next to the one with which they disagree (Kuokkanen, 2008).

2.2. Cultural appropriation

One of the threats of not taking appropriate ethical consideration when dealing with a minority culture is cultural appropriation. I find it important to define cultural appropriation and misappropriation since they may be confused with the adjective "appropriate", the meaning of which is drastically different. Mentioned below are the Cambridge dictionary definitions, which will hopefully prevent any possible misunderstanding or confusion.

appropriation *noun* [C or U] (TAKING)

[1] the act of taking something for your own use, usually without permission:

[2] (usually disapproving) the act of taking something such as an idea, custom, or style from a group or culture that you are not a member of and using it yourself

(Cambridge, n.d., no page number)

misappropriation *noun* [U]

[1] the act of stealing something that you have been trusted to take care of and using it for yourself

(Cambridge, n.d., no page number)

Dictionary definitions are not enough though to fully understand what cultural appropriation indicates. Ziff and Rao (1997, p. 1) define it as “taking – from a culture that is not one’s own – of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artefacts, history and ways of knowledge”. Cultural appropriation is an especially relevant threat when working with Indigenous cultures.

“Cultural appropriation is particularly controversial since, in the contemporary world, individuals from rich and powerful majority cultures often appropriate from disadvantaged Indigenous and minority cultures. Cultural appropriation is seen as inherently bound up with the oppression of minority cultures.”(Young, 2010, p. ix)

Acknowledging the harm of cultural appropriation and other forms of oppression which colonialism has caused to the minority BIPOC cultures– like this of Songish people, on whose territories American philosopher James O. Young resides (Young, 2010). Young (2010) debates whether or not trans/intercultural artistic expression is a form of cultural appropriation. Borrowing styles, stories, motifs, and similar from different cultures is a norm in the field of arts (Young, 2010). Ballenger and Hamlin (2018) go as far as saying that recalling, reimagining, and reusing previously encountered motifs is a neurobiological feature of humans, and seeking new is considered to be linked to status, knowledge, understanding of far-lands, and power. Young (2010) acknowledges that taking from the minority cultures is harmful, but rarely is a result of bad intentions, and does not necessarily mean that the subject of appropriation has been misrepresent-

ed; nonetheless members of the appropriated culture have the right to feel offended. Young (2010) reminds that appropriative pieces may still be considered of high aesthetic value.

Openly polemicizing with Young are Erich Hatala Matthes (2019), Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl (2019). Nguyen and Strohl (2019) suggest that cultural appropriation occurs when the intimacy of group practices is violated by an outsider, intimacy here is said to be common identity and group unity. This becomes a little confusing, as what is presented here as intimacy is commonly referred to and named “culture” in the dictionaries (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.). Intimacy on the other hand is defined as “something of a personal or private nature” (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.), which a lot of cultural practices are not (Young, 2021).

intimacy *noun* [C]

[1] the state of being intimate : familiarity

[2] something of a personal or private nature

(Merriam-Webster, n.d., no page number)

culture *noun* [C or U]

[1] the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place or time

(Merriam-Webster, n.d., no page number)

The sentiment that cultural practices are intimate is nonetheless true in cases where these practices are exclusively offered to members of given group (communion in church, sacred rituals). Nguyen and Strohl (2019) give an example of a poser, who self-identifies with a particular group of people by dressing in a particular way (like a biker), despite not sharing one thing that the others claim to have in common (riding a motorcycle). They suggested that the boundaries of this intimacy are sometimes hard to establish, when a group is sub-agential, therefore for an outsider it is important to respect not only boundaries set by that group but also those that are undetermined (Nguyen & Strohl, 2019). Matthes (2019) disagrees with the idea of group intimacy, as a

right foundation, but adds that groups like KKK, fan groups and others should not be given the same intimacy rights. Matthes's (2019) foundation for the wrongfulness of cultural appropriation is oppression of the groups, sometimes performed by outsiders participating in existing structures, and claims that what other authors called intimacy is actually the exercise of autonomy. Young (2021) argues back, that sheer participation in oppressive systems is not making the oppression any worse, and, debatably, in some cases even helps the cause. Borrowing of artistic styles does not perpetuate the oppression of minority cultures, what does, are the systems that reward white people, more than they do others for example broadcasters or governments (Young, 2021). Artists who have gained enough power to have a deciding voice in system building are, of course, encouraged/expected/obliged to speak up for those who are less privileged, but cannot be personally blamed for the unjust publicity that came with their art in current systems. Young (2021) also debunks the statement in Nguyen and Strohl's (2019) article, about the violation of intimacy. Instead Young (2021) suggests that actions that Nguyen and Strohl (2019) called violation of intimacy are simply offensive because they rather break personal wishes and consent of individuals or a group. This consent may apply to some sacred religious practices of a given group being misappropriated, and other cultural practices exclusive to this group. This cultural offence, that according to Young (2021) has been confused with intimacy, is putting the "appropriator" in the position in which they do not have within the culture (an atheist taking communion in catholic church is putting themselves in the position of recently confessed believer). In the end though, as mentioned by Young (2010) – everybody has the right to be offended.

Despite the chosen notion, a common example of cultural appropriation is the portrayal of the experience of the colonised peoples, by the representatives of the majority/colonising groups (Clammer, 2014). In his article *Writing Development: Literature of Unique Transformation* Clammer (2014) shares the voices of the colonised, their critique towards the white "first world" academics, and their concern about colonialism. Sourcing the knowledge taking from inauthentic voices can result in various different issues, from misplacing the area spoken about (Manderstedt et al., 2021; Said, 1979), or placed far enough from the area to lose context (like Idajärvi, Manderstedt et al., 2021). The inauthentic narrative about the area, may impact the perception of it to the point that it starts to be mixed up with what is acceptable to be said about it (Said, 1962) while creating a completely false image of it (Clammer, 2014). This may be noticed in the conversation about the Orient, which white Orientalism, over the past two centuries, has pictured as exceed-

ingly backwards. This has resulted in commonly spread ideas about biological bases of racial inequality (Said, 1962), resulting in a great foundation for racism. Racism in academia may be systematically perpetuated with the use of racially biased misinforming papers, which support commonsensical beliefs of the time, in a form appealing to an educated audience (Leslie, 1990).

2.3. Cultural appropriation – examples in and outside of the Sámi context

Similar narratives are changing the perception of Sámi people, ever since the colonisation in the 17th century (Pikkarainen & Brodin, 2008). When the “off-devil” narrative has been introduced by Lars Laestadian in 1800s (Lehtola & Müller-Wille 2010) further discriminatory policies regarding Sámi People, their traditions and beliefs started (Pikkarainen & Brodin, 2008). The narratives, even though born centuries ago, lived up to these days, and still influence writers.

“Lars, who was the only Sámi I had ever known, and the passport for my journey greeted me like a brother. He had dark almond eyes of a Mongolian hunter; thick, straight, dark hair. A Norwegian who wasn’t a Norwegian, who would have been branded a drunk and a work-shy Lapp (spit) in every town between Tromso and Tonsberg. Forty years ago. Maybe even now.

He and his wife, Biret, had a dishwasher, an electric carving knife, satellite television. “Are you surprised?” he laughed at me, and maybe I looked it.”

- *Beneath the Ice: In Search of the Sámi*
(Kenneth Steven, 2016, no page number)

The quote from Kenneth Steven’s *Beneath the Ice: In Search of the Sámi* is a perfect example of perpetuating the harmful preconceptions about minority communities. Contrary to different authors, Kenneth is writing from his own experience and about his own misconceptions that he will debunk later in the book, as his preconceptions turn out to not be true. Unfortunately, not all of the non-Sámi authors get to debunk their preconceptions, as proven by Manderstedt, Palo and Kokkola (2021) in their essay *Rethinking Cultural Appropriation in YA Literature through Sámi*

and Arctic Pedagogies. They take a closer look at the appropriative character of Charlotte Cederlund's series of novels – *Idäjarvi*, and compare it to similar book *Soppero* by a Sámi author Ann-Helén Laestadius. The controversy of the two similar plotlines comes down to the Sámi experience being based on first-hand experience, and testimonies heard from those who lived it (Laestadius), versus book and online research on the general topic of the Sámi culture (Cederlund). The lack of first-hand experience or second-hand testimonies results in controversial parts of the story being put in the spotlight, for example pushback from the Sámi community to accept an urban-Sámi as one of their own – as in Cederlund's book series, instead of the racism from the majority group in the urban situation – as in Laestadius' novel. Even though written with good intentions, Cederlund's story is not an accurate representation of the urban Sámi experience, and is understandably considered cultural appropriation (Madnerstedt et al., 2021). However, as per Young (2010) that does not indicate that Cederlund's story is of a low aesthetic value.

The phenomenon of a majority group member portraying the minority group member goes beyond the world of fiction literature. In 2013 interview a Sápmi born and bred, but ethnically Swedish artist Lisa Vipola suggested that everybody can be a *duojár*, and self-identified as a Sámi person, in an act of what Vipola compared to a queer “coming out” way of exploring the boundaries of identity (Bydler, 2017, p. 147). An interview was held after the opening of Vipola's exhibition, for which she created “traditional” Sámi *duodji* – handicrafts. The suspicion from the Sámi people, in the position of the colonised, followed, and the lack of understanding of the differences between the colonial private property art world and Indigenous poetic expressions based on relations were uncovered (Bydler, 2017). These different ways of viewing intellectual property and identity changes the approach with which people interact with tradition, making it either a trust-based sharing between familiars, or a transaction which would merely financially benefit the original knowledge holder. Supporting this notion may be considered Rauna Kuokkanen (2000, p. 420), who in her article called *Towards an “Indigenous Paradigm” from a Sámi perspective* says:

“We have to be careful, however, with the distribution of our traditional knowledge so it will not “run away” from us; so that it will not be stolen or appropriated by those who still have better and wider access to publicity and power and who may use it as their own.” (Kuokkanen, 2000, p. 420)

Many novelists are in disagreement with the idea that one shall not represent the lives of others, for fear of misrepresentation. Interviewed for The Guardian Article *Who’s life is it anyway?* (Alderman, et al., 2016) 11 novelists answer whether or not there should be limits to what they can write about. A lot of them argue that cultural appropriation does not exist in the field of fiction, and claim that authors who misrepresent BIPOC experience are simply bad writers (Alderman, et al., 2016). Some writers agreed that misrepresentation happens, and should be addressed accordingly for instance by sharing bad reviews, which pinpoint these very issues. Authors stand for the freedom of creativity, but it seems that they follow some unwritten rules of being a “good writer” which in most cases prevent them from committing cultural appropriation (Alderman et al., 2016).

2.4. Inter- and transculturalism

Acts of appropriation are part of the process by which we make ourselves. Appropriating – taking something for one’s own use – need not be synonymous with exploitation. This is especially true of cultural appropriation. The “use” one makes of what is appropriated is the crucial factor.

~ bell hooks (1995, p. 11)

In the current world, it is really difficult to stay isolated from the influence of other cultures. Even the historical pieces show that every piece of art is a transcultural hybrid, whether that is in the process or as an art piece (Veloso & Wagner, 2019). When talking about making art inspired by other cultures it is important to understand the possible dynamics between these cultures. With help come Ernst Wagner and Luisa Veloso (2019) who explain in various ways in which the cultures and power dynamics between them in their essay *Arts Education and Diversity: Terms and Concepts*, where they clearly define what each of the concepts indicate.

Multiculturalism is predominantly a concept referring to different cultures as self-contained units, like containers existing side by side on a ship (Veloso & Wagner, 2019, p. 2).

Interculturalism follows the notion of (again largely closed) units whose constellations are however similar to billiard balls: the interaction among the various units resembles the movements on a pool table; they influence each other without changing their inner structure (Veloso & Wagner, 2019, p. 2).

Transculturalism (...) rejects the idea that cultures are distinguishable units and instead views them as constructs without clear boundaries; according to this concept, cultures are already mixed in themselves and are interwoven into an indissoluble network of influences, adoptions, mutual transformations etc. (Veloso & Wagner, 2019, p. 2).

Global culture (...) addresses the phenomena such as transnational trends in youth cultures on the one hand or the world of consumption and lifestyles on the other; it is shaped by global brands with transnational economic power (Veloso & Wagner, 2019, p. 2).

Monoculture (...) a growing tendency in most European countries (...) that aims at enhancing cultural homogenization by emphasizing an exclusive (national or social or ethnic) identity within the close “borders” and enforcing the cultural construction of the roots of those identities (Veloso & Wagner, 2019, p. 3).

These are different ways in which cultures may interact with one another, but for the purpose of this research I will only be looking closer at the first three. The main difference between multi-, inter-, and transcultural expression is further defined with their approach towards the other, may it be strangeness of the other in multiculturalism, interpretation of the other in interculturalism, and finally inner assimilation of the other in transculturalism (Veloso & Wagner, 2019). But how can one ascend to transculturalism? Sheer knowledge acquisition does not make for intercultural (learning), it also requires certain social (or in the context of art – artistic) experiences. Those experiences later activate the discovery of the “difference” and its transcendence to (inner) assimilation (De Vita, 2005).

Promoting intercultural or transcultural communication is a critical process of creating meanings, sharing them and connecting different realities and different truths (De Vita, 2005). The transcultural communication in the Arctic context is explored and analysed by Maria Huhmarniemi, whose efforts are: promoting transcultural art while cherishing the local characteristics of arts, sharing these characteristics with newcomers, and encouraging the inclusion of marginalised voices in the Arctic capital – Rovaniemi (Huhmarniemi, Forthcoming; Huhmarniemi & Hiltunen, Forthcoming; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020).

2.5. Migration and art

Living in the modern world puts artists in a very interesting position. The ease, with which one can travel, may cause frequent changes in the environment, that lead one to experience new physical surroundings, but also the access to the Internet results in the interaction with the virtual testimonies of unknown cultures. All this influences the artistic expression and one’s home, a place where they feel like they belong. This impact on artistic expression caused by the change

of surroundings is especially uncanny for migrants and expats, turning them into ultimate trans-cultural artists.

The idea of what an immigrant is to a culture has been constantly shifting. Previously it was believed that immigrants are sacrificing their own culture in order to assimilate with the new one (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010). This understanding has changed overtime, as the society started acknowledging that immigrants actually work for the transformation of the culture, as their experience is more hybrid, multivocative and translated (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010). Migration and migrants are omnipresent in any society nowadays, and their presence is undoubtedly a source of cultural transformation (Bal, 2007). This happens through new styles emerging in previously homogenous cultures, and these spread across different forms of art, music, fashion, cuisine, into the mainstream culture and back (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010).

The effects of artistic expression of migrants are versatile, they range from breaking across boundaries through the use of imagination (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010); conveying information through various art forms to avoid potential misunderstanding coming from linguistic diversity (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010); being a way of adaptation, as it humanises strangers, making them comprehensible and even appealing in their adopted country (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010; Scafidi, 2005); but it may also be constructing of a place that could answer the wish for belonging or feeling at home, offering oneself a refuge (Markiewicz, 2007).

The cultural expression of an immigrant may come from many different places, as they face language and cultural differences that make them rethink their identity and how they are seen in the new environment, making their lives self-scrutinised (DiMaggio & Fernández-Kelly, 2010). The process of creating art challenges the known and disturbs in a way (Markiewicz, 2007). It may also be shaped by the tension between the wish to understand and a wish to rebuild the knowledge from a single isolated case (Howing, 2007). Some theories say that art does not come from within, as Markiewicz's (2007) theory about trauma based art would suggest, but from the situations and problems, encounters with other people, stories, and events that are later translated into impressions which become art (Celikten, 2020).

3. Methods: cultural immersion, arts based and artistic research

3.1. Arts based research

Arts based research is a research methodology created for the topics that are not possible to explore with the conventional methods (Leavy, 2018; Barone & Eisner, 2012). It was initially difficult for me to consider my very personal and symbolic work as valid research, perhaps due to the background in more concrete fields (MSc of Architecture at a technical university). Nonetheless arts based research, thoroughly characterised primarily by Patricia Leavy, Tom Barone and Elliot W. Eisner, of whom the last one introduced this methodological genre in early 1990s (Leavy, 2018), allowed my process to exist within the research realm.

Due to the nature of the thesis, approaching the new, the unknown, and experimenting, I had to experience it myself in order to find new questions and ideas (Leavy, 2018). And arts based research gives me tools to translate my personal artistic creation into scientific answers to research questions. According to Barone and Eisner (2012) the literal meaning of the words “arts based research” is “approach to research defined as a method designed to enlarge human understanding” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 8), and that is exactly what I had to do.

Using non-traditional research methods like arts based research is becoming progressively more common (Leavy, 2015). The common idea of what research is, is highly focused around numerical values, literal statements, and other scientific ways. The idea that prose or art can carry valuable knowledge about society, and shed light on important issues, just as traditional research does, is still new and alien in most scientific fields. Verification seems to be valued higher than craft of the research, numbers easier to proof check than a novel, a social commentary, and even within this field we strive for clarity, no gaps for thought, no ambiguity. Standardisation of research and the definitions of what a legitimate research is, is in the end limiting the researchers’ innovativeness when it comes to research methods. It becomes problematic when trying to describe and paint an accurate image of subtle interactions using tools that are fit for scientific precision, rather than providing insight into immeasurable nuances of various affairs (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Sheer facts are frequently inadequate to tell the whole story, due to their de-

conceptualised nature, and they cannot grasp the nuance of human affairs, which arts can describe perfectly (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

Arts based research may be described as a “transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building that combines the tenets of the creative arts in research contexts” (Leavy, 2018, p. 4). In practice it is a set of methodological tools used by researchers of many disciplines during any of the research stages (Leavy, 2018). As a method, arts based research is highly flexible when it comes to data collection, and its relation to research participants. The data may be collected traditionally using qualitative and quantitative methods; created by participants; but also fully relating to the researchers’ process (Leavy, 2017). The latest method has been used in the presented research.

Arts based research is often considered to exist within a qualitative paradigm (Leavy, 2018; Barone & Eisner, 2012), since qualitative research may be understood as “the use of nonquantitative forms of representation to describe, interpret, and appraise the features of some process, situation, or individual” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 11). Arts based research “emphasises the generation of forms of feelings that have something to do with understanding some person, place, or situation; this is not simply a quantitative disclosure of an array of variables; it is the conscious pursuit of expressive form in the service of understanding” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 7). It is said to exist on a spectrum (continuum) between arts and science (Holm et al. 2018,; Leavy, 2017), or on their intersection (Leavy, 2018). Often science and arts are seen as contrary concepts, but they share similarities like exploration, illumination and representation of human life, social affairs, and natural worlds (Leavy, 2018). The placement on the continuum is vastly dependant on the priorities in the research, may it be insights gained from the proves of making (more towards arts; also referred to as artistic research, explained in the next subchapter), or collecting and analysing data (content) with scientific methods and using arts as a tool to represent it (more towards science) (Leavy, 2017; Holm et al., 2018). Within arts based research new nomenclature has been suggested, the word “content” is often used when referring to generated data, when arts is a method and content of the research, as it may otherwise seem inaccurate when compared to more traditionally carried out research (Leavy, 2017).

Arts not only are a cultural enrichment to society, an artistic outlet for an artist, but due to leaving impressions by encouraging a holistic response are a valuable tool for the researchers, as with art new spaces may be explored, and through that exploration new insights found (Leavy, 2018).

Arts based research allows gaining understanding of topics that would otherwise not be researchable. It is easily accessible for the “consumer”, therefore creates a unique space for social reflection on these “non-researchable” topics (Leavy, 2017). Arts based research is an “effective effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.1). It provides an opportunity for its consumer to experience the issue, provoke a visceral (Leavy, 2018) emotional empathetic (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2018), psychological (Leavy, 2018) and intellectual (Leavy 2018) response to a topic that may otherwise be hard to comprehend (Barone & Eisner, 2012), which leads to long lasting impressions (Leavy, 2018). Arts based research benefits its recipient with the change it brings to the ways in which we come to know, how we see, and how we feel (Barone & Eisner, 2012). It must be remembered though, that it shall not be taken at face value, but rather considered an inspiration to seek further inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Arts based research is able to provoke emotional and empathetic responses due to the use of sensory modalities that ought to carry meanings which are impossible to share using plain words, which gives it advantage over other forms of research (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

Being based on aesthetic knowing, arts based research is linked to empathy and reflexivity of the consumer and the researcher, in order to create and convey meaning (Gerber et al., 2012). Arts based research not only recognizes art as a tool for spreading truths and bringing awareness about issues, values other ways of knowing than verbal, and includes different ways of knowing, but also recognizes that art is crucial in understanding a self-other dynamic (Leavy, 2018). For all those reasons ethics are an important element of arts based research. Researchers who choose to work within this field should try to follow a general list of rules suggested by Leavy (2017), since they seem to be a good guide to avoid needless controversy. Suggested is including discussion of the ethical structure of the project. To begin with, disclosing the value system which the research follows (for example: exploration of stereotypes, presentation of new ways of seeing/thinking, inclusion of underrepresented groups) (Leavy, 2017). Secondly, discussing the ethical praxis, which mainly are related to any participants or stakeholders involved in the project (for example: IRB approvals, consent, or relational ethics) (Leavy, 2017). And in the end describing the reflectivity of the practice, examining the artistic process and final representation, it may include for instance place in the research project, and in case of participatory processes attention to the power dynamics in the project (Leavy, 2017).

Despite still being a developing field, arts based research is not that new of a concept. Art was introduced as a form of gathering qualitative data in the 1980s, but has been known as a learning and therapeutic tool for way longer (Leavy, 2018). Across different disciplines, professionals have used arts based research to shed light on various topics, for example novels by the creator of American neurology – Silas Weir Mitchel (1824–1914) were deeply rooted in his observation of the patients. Similarly the short story of Charlotte Perkins Gillman from 1892 called *The Yellow Wallpaper* commented on the patient-doctor dynamics in the field of neurology (Leavy, 2018).

An artist, therapist, clinical supervisor, educator, and activist– Barbara J Fish (2018), is a perfect example of how artistic process can be used as a form of research. Coming from an artistic home, Fish (2018) uses painting and drawing as means to “investigate her medical practice, deepen her understanding and offer material of reflection” (Fish, 2018, p. 336). Regardless of the difference between Fish’s and mine topic, I find her article a valuable input on how artistic process can lead to better understanding of a given issue, or even turn the creators attention towards a completely different problem, and further shed light on it. The way in which Fish uses art to analyse real-life interactions, which she later iteratively reinterprets through others and her own art, until actual solutions to existing problems appear, is quite admirable. The artworks are meant to “transform children’s testimonies into metaphors, bringing them into public discourse” (Fish, 2018, p. 350), but they seem to also be a very private process of self-care as a recipient of countless traumatic stories. Fish does not stay away from traditional research methods, an interview is her initial method of inquiry, but the rigid forms of conventional research take away from the plasticity that she can achieve with response art – Fish’s artistic research process.

3.2. Artistic research

Arts based research is a continuum. This continuum exists between art and science, and within it is the use of arts as a tool for research, but also as a method of research. The latter one may also be called artistic research. The nomenclature within the arts based research tends to get mixed up a lot. Shaun McNiff, in his article for Patricia Leavy's *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* clearly refers to artistic research, and defines it as such, while using the acronym ABR.

A process of inquiry whereby the researcher, alone or with others, engages the making of art as a primary mode of inquiry. – McNiff, 2014, p. 259

Even though confusingly stated as arts based research, McNiff's (2018) definition is the best one available. The term artistic research, even though visible in literature from different parts of the world, seems to be mostly a term used by Finnish Art Academia. Since the 1997 doctoral program in artistic research has been operating at the Academy of Fine Arts of Helsinki, where works the main "spokesperson" for the method – Mika Hannula (2014).

Artistic research is characteristically not research about or of but a participatory act and reflection with a strong performative element. – Mika Hannula, 2014, p. 4

In his book *Artistic Research: Theories, methods and practices* Hannula characterises artistic research based on the features that most of the examples hold: art being the focal point, being artistically experimental as how it is transmitted and how it transmits a meaning, being self-reflective, being self-critical and outwardly communicative, being placed in the historical and disciplinary context, using diverse methods, emphasising fruitfulness, being hermeneutic and interpretative (Hannula, 2005, pp. 20–21). Carrying some or all of these features, works of artistic research aim to meet some of the following goals and purposes: produce information that serves practice, develop methods with which they are linked, increase understanding of the link between art and its context, interpret works as cultural, political and pedagogical products, produce knowledge, critically analyse art and its trends, rethink, and question the role of the artist (Hannula, 2005, pp. 21–22).

Instead of defining artistic research in simple words the character of artistic research, and the goals and purposes come together in Hannula’s 2014 book *Artistic Research Methodology* to create a basic formula of artistic research.

Artistic research = artistic process (acts inside the practice) + arguing for a point of view (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work) (Hannula, 2014, pp. 15–17)

“Artistic process” may consist of: preparing works of art, moving between insider and outsider positions, documenting the acts, and committed with an eye on the conditions of the practice (Hannula, 2014, pp. 15–17). The practices embody the characteristics of “artistic research” but also work towards its goals, for example questioning conditions of the practice while staying relevant with its value-, goods-, and commitment-wise (Hannula, 2014, pp. 15–17). “Arguing for the point of view” on the other hand may be: social and theoretical imagination, hermeneutics, conceptual, linguistic and argumentative innovations, verbalization (Hannula, 2014, pp. 15–17). Some of the parts of the equation are later made public, and some are part of the process, which influences further inquiries (Figure 1).

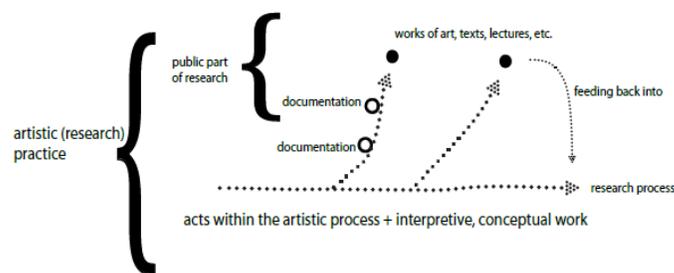


Figure 2.1. Artistic Research Practice and the Public Part of Research

Figure 1 Artistic research practice (Hannula, 2014, p. 18).

Even though spoken of more concretely, this point is proven by McNiff who notes that methods of artistic research cannot be “constrained by fixed and sanctioned protocols”, and instead should answer to the problems in unique and pragmatic ways (McNiff, 2014, p. 24). Some claim that artistic research is a form of qualitative research, which is generally agreed upon. Artistic inquiry though is more than just another tool in qualitative research (McNiff, 2014).

3.3. Cultural immersion as a method of reflection

Cultural immersion is a pedagogical tool aimed to increase inter- and cross-cultural competence, expand cultural sensitivity, cultural tolerance, global awareness, self-development, listening, and cultural communication, critical thinking, and empathy (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009; Barden & Cashwell, 2013; Onosou, 2020). Cultural immersion may take the form of deep personal involvement with an object of study, whether that is another language, culture, or for example: a video game (Crossman, 2018).

The tool was initially developed by a polish anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski in 1920s (Crossman, 2018) in aims to “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world” (Malinowski, 1922, p. 14). Revolutionary for its time, research on the customs of Kula People of Trobriand Islands was published in a book called *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. His method of the ethnographer immersing themselves in the local culture, away from the “white men” and documenting their “new life”, has become a common practice in social sciences: anthropology, ethnography, sociology, and replaced anecdotal reports of travellers from times before (Moberg, 2018).

Nowadays the method is used commonly in the field of pedagogy and psychology, and other helping professions, but is also encouraged in students of various fields (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009; Barden & Cashwell, 2013; Smolcic & Katunich, 2016; Onosou, 2020). Cultural immersion is possible thanks to international study programs like: the Study Abroad Program, the Global Learning Programme (Onosou, 2020); but also various programmes tailored to professionals: international study tours, overseas student teaching (Smolcic & Katunich, 2016).

The method itself is self-explanatory. It consists of exposing oneself to a new cultural environment that is different from their home society and getting involved in local and international activities (Onosou, 2020). In my research, cultural immersion was an inevitable part of the reflection process, as it encourages critical thinking, but also cultural sensitivity (Onosou, 2020; Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009), it triggered a reconsideration of my artistic research process and its outcomes.

4. *SLAVOIK* – finding the transcultural through artistic research



Figure 2 Poster advertising exhibition. *misia siennicka*, 2021.

The forming of the *SLAVOIK* project concept has been a slow process; it has transformed multiple times throughout the course of time, and led to an exhibition (Figure 2). The thought-process ignited in 2018 while I was still studying architecture, during my Erasmus in Oulu, when we took a day trip to Rovaniemi to see Alvar Aalto's designs, but also to visit the Arktikum museum. The Arktikum museum was the first place at which I heard *Ođđa Áigodat*, an album by

Solju, a Sámi band consisting of Ulla Pirttijärvi and her daughter Hilda Länsman, which combines modern music with traditional Sámi *yoik*, and I became obsessed with it.

Although the actual project did not take that long, the thought process that led to it was, one might say, a lifelong effort. Some of the photos used in the project are taken as far back in the past as 2012. The ignition of the ideation process could be dated to 29th September 2018, when I heard *yoik* for the first time. I did not know what it was, and I was too shy to ask the clerk at the Arktikum museum about the music being played in the hallway, so I took a picture of every single album there was on sale, and went through all of them later, back in Oulu.

The choice of the topic for this thesis was quite a lengthy and difficult process, as I am used to independent work, and I was struggling to find something that felt “mine”, and meaningful. I have started the Arctic Art and Design program, because I wanted to learn about myself as a creator, so it only seemed appropriate to step into the topic that intrigued me the most. My background in traditional music, like participation in several workshops, band, and teaching workshops, has impacted my strong response to *yoik*, as it felt strangely familiar, and I had a really strong need to further explore it. This exploration started with an assignment for Arctic Cultures class, where I did quite a thorough literature review on the topic of *yoik*. It has led me to a better understanding not only of what *yoik* is, but has also shed a light on what Sámi culture is like, and finally, how beautifully *yoik* complements the lives of Sámi people (which I would not stop being surprised with – the *yoik* sang at Sápmi Pride 2021 for instance).

The idea of taking this topic for my thesis was suggested by Maria Huhmarniemi, but I must say that I was hesitant at first. I feared that researching something for a longer time might turn me away from it, and I did not want to lose the special connection I felt to *yoik*. Hesitantly, I gave it a chance. But as I had already gone through most of the literature I could find on that topic, I decided to try to seize the essence of *yoik* by interviewing *yoik* artists, and perhaps trying to find a teacher who would introduce me to this vocal technique. *Yoik* is a very personal, culturally sensitive way of expression though, and access to it is not possible for anybody, and my attempts to find a teacher were rather miserable. I have contacted several artists from around Sápmi and managed to arrange a meeting with Ante Aikio.

The meeting took place on 12.09.2020 during a Levi market where Aikio performed. That was my first live *yoik* experience, and despite the touristy atmosphere of the place, and the chaos

around, it has taken me to another space. Ante invited me to join him at the *Sámiland* exhibition, where I also had a chance to have a conversation with him about his art, though the conversation was mostly about music, being Sámi, discrimination, and access to media and literature in Sámi language. The last part of the conversation, specifically the access to news, has been particularly interesting, as Ante noted a similarity between Sámi – *nuvttohat*'s *vuoddagat* (*nuvttohat* – winter shoes made from *gámas* – fur from reindeer's leg; *vuoddagat* – shoe-straps weaved on a loom) and Belarusian *krajka* (weaved belts or straps used for various purposes) patterns he saw on a flag (it was back when there were multiple news-covered protests in Belarus). That little comment made me think about another thing I can explore.

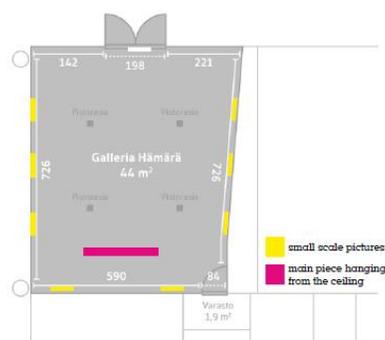
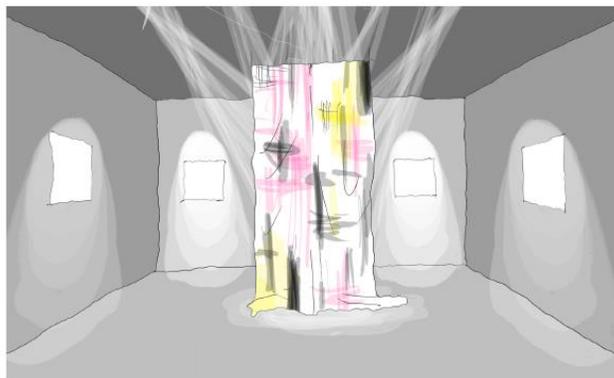
Since I knew that my work would lie somewhere on the spectrum of artistic research, I was encouraged to apply for the exhibition space, which I did, proposing the idea that had not come true in the end, but had been an inspiration for exploration of the topic (Figure 3).

SLAVOIC. an exhibition.

slavoic is ought to be a part of a master thesis work of an arctic art and design student - misia siennicka.

in her work she goes on the journey to self identify in the arctic world through folk music and familiar patterns which she finds in the Sami culture.

the exhibition combines newly found arctic influences and previously explored elements of slavic culture.



the work to consist of 8 season typical landscape photography/collages printed on large scale paper placed on the walls.

in the middle of a room a hanging main piece inspired with the woven belts in Slavic and Sami cultures (as presented on the right side of the image), merged together into a new "identity", materials still to be determined.

a sound-scape consisting of season specific slavic songs and yoiks. played either by individual artworks one per piece or looped in the space.



source: www.czumak.pl



source: www.rorynearns.com

Figure 3 An attachment to the exhibition space application. misia siennicka, 19.10.2020.

I knew that there had been a band weaving tradition in Poland, but as I come from the area that is not particularly folk-culturally rich, I reached out to people who I thought would know better. Since I have been in a folk music band, I had been in several different Facebook groups that gathered folk music enthusiasts, lots of whom are ethnographers, archaeologists, culture historians, and similar. I have asked the group whether they had any resources for *krajka* (weaved belt) making, and sure enough I was quickly recommended a publication by Podlaskie Muzeum Kultury Ludowej (Podlasie’s Museum of Folk Culture; Pluta & Wiśniewska, 2019), which covered patterns and weaving techniques from the area. I was kindly provided with an electronic version of the publication by Aleksandra Pluta, the author of the book and the ethnographer from the Museum.

When it comes to learning about weaving traditions of Sápmi, I have borrowed every book available in Rovaniemi libraries on the topic of Sámi *duodji*, but unfortunately, they were not a good representation of the complexity and variety of Sámi weaving culture. Luckily, I stumbled across Anna Ciúčka Sjursen’s Instagram page. She is a Sámi *duojár*, who works to maintain and preserve Sámi weaving traditions. Her page, the best modern day archive of Sámi weaving, is full of *boagán* (weaved belt tied on the waist in traditional Sámi regalia – *gákti*) and *vuoddagat* (weaved shoelaces) from different areas of Sápmi.

Having these two cultures of weaving right in front of my eyes, I began comparing and synthesising. Some of the *vuoddagat* patterns turned out to be really similar to those of some *krajki*, sometimes it was a matter of two different points in the pattern consisting of approximately 100 points. That allowed me to pretty safely “translate” the patterns into a new combined form. Not only have I been exploring the weaving patterns, different elements of traditional regalia – *gákti*, and traditional costumes from the area of Poland that some of my ancestors came from, but also cultural symbols: sun and bear.

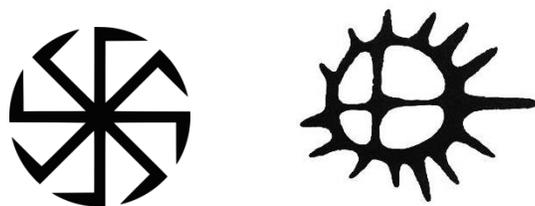


Figure 4 Swarzyca (on the left), Sámi sun symbol (on the right).

At the beginning of 2021 I had to prepare a sneak-peak of the exhibition (Figure 2), and perhaps due to the *kaamos* (winter darkness) season, I decided for my first piece to be sun-related. In the piece, I combine the Slavic Sun Wheel (Swarzyca) with Sámi Sun symbol (Figure 4) over the photograph of the sun setting over the Baltic Sea (Figure 14) – the very body of water which connects the lands of my sprouting and blooming. This first piece ignited the process of synthesising other ideas, consulting them with my tutor Maria Huhmarniemi, the irreplaceable Ante Jalvela, and in further stages also with the dean of the Art Faculty Timo Jokela. A lot of the ideas were deemed as not recommended throughout the process, which I decided not to pursue, without fully understanding the reasoning behind it (Figure 5). I have only managed to comprehend the reasons when making illustrations of *duodji* for Sámi Archives' project *AIDA (Arctic Indigenous Design Archives)* in May–August 2021.



Figure 5 An idea I was advised not to pursue. misia siennicka, 2021.

The exhibition was scheduled for 22 March 2021 until 08 April 2021. The artworks were created primarily between mid-February until the exhibition date, based on the data gathered, processed, and interpreted over the course of many years. I used mixed media techniques: acrylic on wood, embroidery on photographs, and creative writing to create a colourful heptptych and a muted colour “main piece” with accompanying stories.

The rainbow coloured heptptych (Figure 6) was an immediate reference to my belief that I am shaped by different elements, stories, people, and places. It is the next step of a project *what is misia?* which I presented when applying to the program, in which I answered the main question with the statement: “the spectrum. multi-layered spectrum consisting of different states and emotions, influenced by several factors like people met on the timeline of life, places explored, and many others. The work represents the equally tempered seven tone scale of spectrum which in reality consists of infinite frequencies.” (*what is misia?* – misia siennicka, 2019, no page number). In the new project the focus is rather on the cultural self, the self shaped with culture and its artefacts rather than individual experiences. It is also homage to the queerness of that self.



Figure 6 Rainbow heptptych. misia siennicka, 2021.

The base concept for each of the elements was to create an abstract background using acrylics on wood, representing a memory image of a place, with a white quadrangle within it. On the white quadrangle a wooden board was placed with a photograph of a said place with abstracted/hybrid references to Sámi and Slavic cultures embroidered on it. Each image is also supported by a short text in a booklet. The heptptych follows the colour spectrum of the original *Retro 8* LGBT community flag, designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker (Figure 7), with bottom 3 colours: turquoise, indigo and violet swapped for 2 more generic pieces in blue and purple. However, I chose not to stick to the metaphorical meaning of the colours.



Figure 7 Gilbert Baker's design of LGBT flag from 1978, nowadays referred to as Retro 8.

On the following pages the individual pieces are presented (Figures 8–21), with the short story accompanying them. The whole reference list, as it could have been seen during the exhibition, is attached as an appendix (Appendix 1).



Figure 8 *Pink*; 1st of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 9 Detail of *Pink*; 1st of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

PINK

I don't remember where the dreams took me, I remember seeing hills, hills covered in pine forests. It must have been summer, although it wasn't too warm, I could feel a soft breeze on my face. I knew that high up the wind would be stronger, but the trees worked as a small shield that protected me from being blown away.

I heard metallic sounds all around me, I didn't recognize them at first, some of them were rhythmical, the others were not. I closed my eyes to listen to their melody.

The rhythmical rattling sound was getting closer. I still couldn't make out its origin, so I opened my eyes and saw her, a colourfully dressed woman, wearing a beautiful *solju* on her chest. I thought that it looked like a number of little universes captured inside the little silver plates on which I could also see my reflection. It gave me a weird sense of belonging, as if the multitude of my reflections on this beautiful object made me part of something that I might not ever be allowed to experience on my own. The woman smiled seeing me analyse my own reflection, but seemed to have something more important to do, and just continued her rhythmically pleasing march towards the future.

I felt a sharp pain and looked down to realise that I myself had been a source of the other metallic clatter. The scissors in my hands had cut through my skin, and I watched a drop of blood run down my hand onto my dreamy creation. On the forest floor in front of me were many coloured paper cuttings, *wycinanki*, in different floral patterns, which I never knew I could make. I knew that somewhere, in distant parts of my homeland, people made them as their local-heritage, but they seemed as distant to me as anything else. But there I was, in my dream, making them myself.



Figure 10 *Red*: 2nd of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 11 Detail of *Red*; 2st of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

RED

That night in my dream I saw the fells of Enontekiö. The place I already felt quite familiar with, and always thought of it warmly. Something seemed different in the dream though. In the place of clouds in the sky were stripes of patterns. The stripes I recognized as weaved belts, which I knew as *krajki*, but later learned that may be referred to as *vuoddagat* in the Sapmi. Over them, or rather on top of the fells ran the bear.

Since an early age the theme of the bear had followed me around. Maybe at first I didn't even understand that *Misia* and *miś* (bear) were not the same thing. The bear had always been an animal I could see myself as because of that, but now I was looking at the bear. And the images of bears started popping up in my mind. I saw a 2500 year old Celtic sculpture of a bear from a mountain next to my hometown, which is up to this day worshipped by believers of praslavic pagan religions. I saw the images of praslavic people worshipping bears as a symbol of masculinity, as a symbol of their god Volos, but also feared that they may be turned into a turnskin bear if they did Gods wrong. Before my eyes also appeared a spirit of a bear from Sapmi, a spirit running freely delivering messages between people and gods.



Figure 12 *Orange*; 3rd of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 13 Detail of *Orange*; 3rd of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

ORANGE

I was in the forest again, this time looking downhill, onto a little stream. I was able to tell that I was not in the arctic because of the abundance of leafy trees around me. It was early autumn, *ruska* time, and I saw the leaves flying around. I thought that it was weird that the wind got that deep into the forest but I didn't question it any further, I just observed.

And observed could be the leaves being blown into patterns. These patterns I knew I'd seen before, first on my childhood Easter costume, a Krakovian dress. My family was not even from there, but somehow this exotic item came into some family member's belonging, and I was obliged to jump into it once per year.

But the patterns also resembled what I'd seen on a number of *gákti* I saw in Lapland. I knew that the patterns weren't exactly the same but I felt that the leaves in my dream didn't care about it. That they wanted it to be a telepathic intercultural conversation of the ancestral creators on how to make the dresses more unique.



Figure 14 *Yellow*; 4th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 15 Detail of *Yellow*; 4th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

YELLOW

It must have been the most beautiful sunset of my life. I was standing at the edge of Baltic Sea, the very body of water that connects the lands where I sprouted, with the lands where I'm blooming. "That's the water that gives me the power" I thought and dipped my body into its coldness. I swam in the direction of the sun and felt the world split in half.

I heard the songs calling from north and south, I heard the beating of a drum. The *noaidi's* drum filled the whole sky. It seemed to be setting together with the sun, and together with it the sun wheel, a beautiful symbol of Beavi. As the sun wheel was setting, I saw *swarzyca* emerge from the waters of Baltic Sea as Beavi and Svarog greeted each other kindly.



Figure 16 *Green*; 5th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 17 Detail of *Green*; 5th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

GREEN

I saw a lot of sharp rocks glimmering in the setting sun. Maybe it was a mistake to start hiking towards Samotnia (The Lonely Place) that late, but the world was so beautiful that I couldn't be mad at myself.

The sharpness of the rocks was balanced out by the softness of the low greenery growing on each side of the path. It was pretty late and I was tired, so I lay down by one of the rocks and looked up North. The view was spectacular; the aggressive profile of the ground was cutting through the sky at a sharp angle. My sleepy eyes started playing tricks on me, and found nonexistent connections in the clouds, similar to what I'd already seen in the other dream, forgotten patterns of *vuoddagat* and *krajki*.



Figure 18 *Blue*; 6th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 19 Detail of *Blue*; 6th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

BLUE

This must have been before I reached the real north. I was going by Oulu, and I stopped by Niilesjärvi to cool myself down. The place was absolutely stunning, quite swampy I must admit, but breathtakingly picturesque. There was no one sharp line in the image; the trees were soft, so was the grass, and the irregularly shaped lake reflected the fluffy landscape and cotton-like clouds.

It seemed like one of these places that would be perfect for a summer afternoon nap, if it wasn't for its dampness. The Morse coded messages hidden in *vuoddagat* would appear on one's dreamy skies calling them to get back on the path, and follow it all the way to Sapmi.



Figure 20 *Purple*; 7th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.



Figure 21 Detail of *Purple*; 7th of the heptptych. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

PURPLE

I was standing on the border between Czech Republic and Poland, facing my favourite direction – North. It was a hot summer day but I was cold. Everybody else was wearing shorts and t-shirts but I was shivering. I had already put on all of my clothes which helped a bit with the feeling of cold, but I could still feel my fingers freezing.

I looked up into the sky again, as if calling the North for help. The sky was pretty cloudy, ever-changing, clouds were moving rapidly. At some point though I saw tiny cumulus forming in the sky, the old hands of The North were making a pair of gloves for me. *Duodji*, I recognized a pattern I'd seen in a book a couple days before.

As the pattern fully formed on the sky I could feel my fingers getting the sense of touch again. I felt like grannie North took care of me again.

The images carry the motives and symbols from both Sámi and Slavic cultures in an attempt to merge them into one consistent “cultural landscape”. They find similarities between the beliefs like these in *Beaivi* and *Svarog* (Figures 14–15), symbolism of the bear (Figures 10–11), but also similarities in patterns (Figures 10–13, 16–17). All of the inspirations were presented and their sources were listed thoroughly. The pattern similarities were not only found within one field – handicrafts, but also between landscapes and these patterns – like a grid-like landscape of fields and meadows in Southern Poland and a traditional pattern for Sámi gloves (Figures 20–21).



Figure 22 *Grey; bike* – the main piece. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

The piece that is merging the whole exhibition together was a muted colour shadow, a representation of finding a way, finding the self. A shadow of a person on a bike, following patterned paths of ancestors, not only their own, but also those encountered on a way (Figure 22). The very personal portrayal of a journey was accompanied by a short text:

I got on my bike,

I didn't know where I was going but I believed that the sound would lead me there. It was faint at first, but its sharp character was luring me in.

And I followed... Because despite the sharpness and roughness, it sounded familiar, it was soothing in a way, it felt like ancestral calling. Even though I didn't yet know what it was calling me for.

I hadn't heard these voices before and each of them called me louder than the previous one. It got me places I couldn't have dreamed of, places filled with knowledge possessed by somebody, now or then, but unattainable for me. The knowledge I knew would change me.

I have been on the road for a while now. I heard the calling, some voices faded out and some became louder. I'd passed through a whole spectrum of imaginary landscapes. It felt as if I was surfing on a rainbow, the colours of the cultures on my way glistened.

At some point I stopped. I still heard the sound, the pure voices I'd heard since the beginning of my journey but now it seemed like I've found another calling. I was in the North, it was difficult to cycle at this point, but I didn't mind. I stood and listened to how the sound of *yoik* resonated in me together with the white voices of my ancestors. I felt at home.



Figure 23 The "reference" wall of the exhibition. Photo: misia siennicka, 2021.

As advised by people whom I consulted in the process, the exhibition also included a list of sources, inspirations, references, creators of the traditional handicrafts, symbols, meanings behind them, et cetera (Figure 23). They were hanged as “descriptions” in a way, but also included in a booklet (Appendix 1), which except for the sources included the stories shown above. Each booklet was covered in a photograph of a landscape and stitched together using rainbow coloured yarn.

The process of creating the exhibition was a very difficult walk on the line between cultural appropriation and proper use of culture as an inspiration. There had been moments in which I wanted to give up on it, that would not include the fear of offending people with my work. There had been moments of difficulty in the process, for help with which I am grateful to Johanna Kurpat, Jonas DeBuhr, Alina Korotovskaia, Aleksii Soukka (Figure, 24). There had been nightmares about being lynched. It was also a process connecting me to the cultures in which I got to live in, but also to myself. Looking at it from the perspective of time, I would do some things differently, but I would most certainly do it again, and I hope I will get to continue this exploration.



Figure 24 Hanging the exhibition. Photo: Alina Korotovskaia, 2021.

5. Traineeship at Sámi Archives as cultural immersion

Not long after completing the artistic journey of the SLAVOIC project, in the summer of 2021, I was given an opportunity to be a trainee at the Sámi Archives. This meant that not only would I get to live in Sápmi, but also that I would be put in a Sámi workplace, where the previously academically sheltered ethical considerations will become a real threat. In this form the research process continued as cultural immersion.

I lived in Anár and worked for *Arctic Indigenous Design Archives* at Sámi Archives from the beginning of June of 2021 until the end of August 2021. I was given multiple tasks during the traineeship, but my primary role was illustrating educational materials and graphic design. The *DUODJU* educational materials were prepared by Sámi *duojárs* in 2017, during the *AIDA I* project. The materials had very specific directions, not only, for what the images should represent, but also some illustrations ready. In my work I had to aim for aesthetic consistency with pre-existing materials, but facing the challenges of a non-Sámi person.

There were several rules applied during the process of illustration making for me, as a non-Sámi creator: source pictures of *duodji* attained from local makers (preferably donors of *AIDA*), every piece represented in a picture supported with a free prior and subsequent consent of the maker, eventually retrieved from public places like Sajos culture centre, National Library or SogSakk school archives, no personal input – items that came with consent were to be replicated exactly, with the makers patterns unchanged, unless the pattern belongs to a family – like in *gákti* elements, then pattern was to be abstracted, or omitted to avoid controversy. Following these rules was not always easy, but as the time passed it became automatic. The results were successful, and the original makers of the *duodji* were satisfied with the results.

The second part of the traineeship was more of a creative process, where I was allowed more personal input, and therefore faced the threat of cultural appropriation. My second task was to create a visual identification of the *Indigenous Archives Today and Tomorrow* conference, which took place in Inari in October of 2021. For that part, I worked with archival materials showcasing Sámi calendars, and abstracting them into patterns. I have created several different options, which were later consulted cultural appropriation-wise with Inker-Anni Linkola-Aikio, Gunvor

Guttorm and Anna Westman. With their input I created a final version, which has also gained positive feedback.

Retrospectively, this process was a re-evaluation of my artistic research findings through cultural immersion. Visiting Sámi households, Sámi workplaces, and Sámi cultural events and centres has exposed me to the culture that I previously only knew from books and online resources. I saw the patterns I have embroidered on the gloves by the entrance to friends' house, the countless *soljus* everywhere, weaved belts wrapped around people's waists, or around their shoes, the knots of *liidni* – Sámi scarf, the pompoms, all these elements alive and living. The social aspect of living in Anár, especially during events, was a “reality check” when it comes to knowing my standing towards the Sámi culture. I quickly realised that I might only be familiar with a small part of the community. Building familiar relations was tricky since my stay there was “terminal”, which was distancing me from people.

The lengthy process of this research did not end with the opening or closing of the *SLAVOIK* exhibition. I cannot stress how important the cultural immersion part – the traineeship at *Arctic Indigenous Design Archives* project for Sámi Archives has been in this whole experience. Since I find it to be a valuable part of the process, attached is the traineeship report (Appendix 2). Many of the conclusions that I have come to during this research have been influenced by either my work at the *AIDA* project, or experiences and interactions with people in Sápmi. Together with it came a lot of ideas for the future projects and improvement.

6. Addressing the questions

6.1. Was *SLAVOIK* ethical?

I must admit, when starting to research on Sámi culture back in 2019, at the very beginning of my studies, I was not fully aware of the ethical considerations, nor of the need for them. But as Einstein once said “the more I learn, the more I realise how much I don’t know”. In my case not knowing, was the initial lack of ethical awareness when committing to the research (at the time about *yoik*).

As soon as I realised the ethical controversy of my project, I dove into the words of scholars, who devoted their lives to setting ethical guidelines in Indigenous areas. The scholars seemed to be consistent when agreeing that one shall reach out to the community for free prior informed consent (Nordin Jonsson, 2011. Kuokkanen, 2008), and I have, even though the primary influence in my work came from literature. But none of the scholars said what to do, when all the possible consultants find themselves incompetent, or not in the position to give an opinion on the topic. I kept being referred to the other people, to people with more academic power in the community, until the chain just dropped. I was left with no answer. This made me realise that as an outsider to a culture, and although a white person, but not a member of a colonising group, I was ethically, in a grey area, meaning that my actions could not be clearly judged to be either wrong or right.

Kuokkanen (2000, p. 420) mentioned in her work that “We (Sámi) have to be careful with the distribution of our traditional knowledge (...) so that it will not be stolen and appropriated”. Is finding similarities between one’s own culture and this new influence that happens to be Sámi culture stealing though? Is changing as a person, influenced by this very culture, and what comes from it, merging expressions, and doing a self-exploratory research about it, appropriation? On one hand I think it is, at the end of the day, I chose to expose myself to the parts of the Sámi culture, to drown in my fascination with their beauty. I chose to follow the calling. But on the other hand, as Ballenger and Hamlin (2018) point out, recalling, reimagining and reusing motives is a neurobiological feature of humans, so it may seem perfectly normal to get inspired by new stimuli.

The concern of ethics of my work has never left me. Even while being a trainee for Sámi Archives, I was worried that what I was doing – illustrating materials about Sámi handicrafts – *duodji*, seemed appropriative. I was worried that I should not be the one doing this job; instead a person from within the community should have it instead. I was worried that the way in which I represent the items will not be accepted by the community. Throughout the traineeship though, I have learned how to carry out these situations. I was in contact with multiple creators, all of whom were more than happy to have their works illustrated for the educational materials. At the end of the day it did not matter whether the illustrator was part of the culture or not, because they managed to do it in a culturally sensitive manner.

I believe that my *SLAVOIC* project passes as ethical. Contrary to some before me, for example Vipola (Bydler, 2017), I have not claimed ownership over any of the motifs, techniques, patterns, I have not claimed the identity. I did not try to recreate anything “word for word”. I created my own universe inspired with what I already knew, and what I was just getting to know, always remembering those who have taught me.

I would advise future pursuers of transcultural artistic expression of different cultures to do the same, and to follow what I learned throughout this 2 years long process. Firstly, it is crucial, even though, not clearly stated in the existing ethical guidelines (Nordin Jonsson, 2011; Kuokkanen, 2008; Guttorm & Porsanger, 2011), that an artist/researcher truthfully states the position in which they are within the culture, even more when working with sensitive cultures, like those of minorities, or Indigenous groups. Secondly, if possible, the artist/researcher shall find out what is the community’s opinion about the ethics of the research, if deemed inappropriate; it should probably be carried out by the members of the community. If considered unproblematic, great job. If no one seems to know the answer – it is probably a grey area which can be explored in a sensitive manner. Thirdly, the artist/researcher shall ask creators for the consent to use their work in any way, even if it will be reinterpreted. Fourthly, the researcher should credit everything and everybody in the work, regardless of it being a book, a *duojár*, an archive. Last but not least, it is not advised to claim expertise in the area, the artist/researcher should know their place.

6.2. Was *SLAVOIK* culturally appropriative?

The appropriative side of the research is very closely linked to its ethical nature. Instead of looking only at the ethical consideration during the process though, light is shed also on the results and feedback. There has been a lot of accusations of appropriation of Sámi culture, it was usually aimed at the creators who have either wrongly claimed the belonging to the Sámi community like Vipola (Bydler, 2013), those who have copied the traditional styles and benefited from it, or those who have misrepresented the voice of the members of the minorities – like Cederlund (Manderstedt, Palo & Kokkola, 2021; Said, 1979).

The answer to the question whether this research is an act of cultural appropriation or not, lies in my approach throughout it, the context of the research, but also in the nature of the appropriation of the art. To begin with, I would like to compare my work with the dictionary definition of cultural appropriation.

“The act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture.” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022, no page number)

For the purpose of this project I have used the elements from Sámi culture. I have specifically picked some elements that were overlapping in the Sámi and Slavic (my own) cultures. Some other elements I just found beautiful, or reminiscent of polish landscapes, like the glove patterns found in a book. I never claimed ownership over these elements, and have always sourced them appropriately. I also have, hopefully, shown an appropriate level of respect, like contacting the members of the community in hopes to consult my work on the ethical level, crediting the masters of the crafts in question, reading, learning, and listening to those who had feedback to give me. Another point to add is that this project has been a university experiment of, out of many things, testing the boundaries of good practice when it comes to transcultural art expression, and I feel that this context, changes the perception of the project, and excuses shortcomings (which I was told by a friend, to whom my work was acceptable in this given context).

When it comes to cultural appropriation in the field of art, Young (2008) is a voice of absolution. Young (2008) notes that borrowing styles, stories, motifs, and other content from different cul-

tures is a constant practice in the art field, and it rarely is led by wrong intentions, not to mention the possibility of being beneficial for the minority communities. Young (2008) argues that sometimes it may be considered theft, or be seen as offensive, but that artists usually can sense the right moment, that would not make their artwork be deemed as appropriative. Young (2008) continues by saying that when it is a disadvantaged Indigenous or minority culture being misrepresented, it may result in serious harm. Having only told my own story and created my own universe I have stayed away from representing or misrepresenting the Sámi culture.

Important for this project was a three month period in the summer of 2021 (three months after the exhibition) during which I lived in Sápmi. I have met wonderful people there, who were kind enough to look through my work, and give me feedback, most of which was positive, if not encouraging of further pursuit. Not to mention working in an environment where I have questioned my position as culturally appropriative on a daily basis. This gave me more insight into the issue, since I have not only pondered, but also discussed it with job seniors. I have questioned the ethics of being a paid worker, whose job was to illustrate Indigenous design, and reimagine the Indigenous archival materials into new designs. I have personally felt bad benefiting from this job as an outsider, but was reassured by the co-workers and Sámi community members, with whom long discussions resulted in feeling secure in my work not being wrongful.

If I could draw any conclusions from my experience and the literature through which I went for this research, it is that in the context of art lines of cultural appropriation are blurry. Moving around the grey area may be scary, but with proper respect and attention, it will not be considered even slightly controversial, if not positively received. If not received well, it would seem ethically necessary to share the negative feedback from the (appropriated) culture's community with the recipients of the research (Kuokkanen, 2008; Nordin Jonsson, 2011).

6.3. Was *SLAVOIK* inter- or transcultural?

Submerging oneself in a completely different culture is undoubtedly going to result in a culture hybrid. The borders of the ways in which cultures can interact on the group level are pretty straightforward and well explained by Wagner and Veloso's work (2019). Nonetheless, trying to place my work in these boxes seems complicated.

The research about inter- and transculturalism, from the field of education, and the way of differentiating the concepts, is quite far from the context of artistic expression (Wagner & Veloso, 2019; De Vita, 2005). That makes some of the metaphors quite difficult to apply, when it comes to solely placing art in these fields, and separating it from the socio-cultural context. There are voices that say that all art is a hybrid of different cultures as humans are biologically predisposed to reproduce encountered motifs (Ballenger & Hamlin, 2018). Additionally there are voices that point that almost all artists engage in some level of cultural appropriation (Young, 2008), and therefore create culturally hybrid artworks. This may seem contrary in the Arctic, where local identities are strongly encouraged to be preserved in an untouched form, nonetheless still carrying (transcultural) characteristics of geographically scattered influence (Huhmarniemi, Forthcoming). The question I want to ask here though, is whether my work shall be seen as trans- or intercultural?

As a reminder, transculturalism (or else cross-culturalism) according to Wagner and Veloso (2019, p. 3) would be a “multi-layered construction of individuals, the hybrid construction of identity or the self on the micro level – similar to nations or cultural regions on the meso or macro level”, whereas interculturalism is described as a “situation in many classrooms in today’s schools especially in bigger cities, where pupils from different cultures come together; the respective backgrounds influence their way of communication; interculturalism, here, defines the relationship between teachers and pupils and among pupils”. These two concepts, so similar, may also be differentiated by their approach to “the other”, the first one assimilates “the other”, and versus the second one interprets it (Wagner & Veloso, 2019). I would like to additionally confront these metaphorical descriptions with definitions from Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d., no page numbers):

Transcultural: involving, encompassing, or extending across two or more cultures.

Intercultural: occurring between or involving two or more cultures.

Having worked on the project for a long time, my view on how this project can be placed on the inter-trans cultural spectrum changed. When starting the initial research, beginning the comparative work, submerging myself in the culture my relation to what I was doing was purely intercultural. I was analysing and interpreting “the other”. With my cultural background, which was already influenced by several different cultures, to a different extent, I was in between “mine” and

“the other”, we were coexisting in the same time and space. The further the research proceeded, the more assimilated that “other” felt, the more familiar it became, and it changed me. Starting with previously mentioned ethical awareness on issues I did not know existed prior to my research, continuing with how I see the world and analyse it, the sensitivity, not only the one of the artistic kind, but also the social one. With that I transcended onto a transcultural level.

The perception of the artwork as inter- or transcultural may also be different from the viewer’s perspective. Having shown the artworks to others, those unfamiliar with the cultures have perceived it as nearly coming from a single cultural inspiration source, since the motifs, patterns, and other influences were either alien, or not recognizable as “either/or” to them. I would say that in this situation the project could be classified as transcultural. Others (mostly Sámi people), were able, to some extent, to spot the inspirations taken from their own culture, but not the others, therefore placing the project more on the intercultural side of the spectrum.

I would not call myself an expert on Sámi culture. I would not claim to be an expert on the Slavic culture either. However, I know that in my mind are the ideas that are influenced by both of these cultures, sometimes separately, based on the context, but a lot of the times together, merged into one coherent whole – myself. I know that coming from an area deprived of folk culture, I might never be fluent in any of them, and I do not strive to be, but I am glad to explore, and express the parts which I can, and want to learn.

6.4. Immigrant art – personal standpoint

Crucial in my research was my perspective as an immigrant. Immigrants are said to create in order to be humanised and comprehensible in the adopted country, (DiMaggio & Fernández Kelly, 2010), as the cultural products are easier to accept than individuals themselves (Scafidi, 2005). In the research, and testimonies on the immigrant art, the words “home” and “belonging” come back like a boomerang; art comes in as a way of creating a place that would be a refuge for oneself (Markiewicz, 2007).

I consider myself to be a rather placeless creature, able to feel at “home” after a couple of days spent in a new place, able to make new friends, and connect with people and cultures that I get to

experience. I create my own environment which overlaps with existing structures of the residing place, but is not necessarily dependent on it. That is why I think I create: to ground myself in the place, to learn about it, to experience it to the fullest, and to better myself. Making art may provide refuge, it may provide emotional comfort, and it may provide peace. It does not make home for me though, it does not make me feel more accepted in a new place, even though it may give opportunity for new friendships.

Being an immigrant drastically changes the nature of my research. By alienating me from the context of Nordic states colonising Sámi people, it excuses inspirations taken from the Sámi handicraft culture. By transplanting myself from another world, gives a clear answer to the question about the placement on the inter-trans cultural spectrum. But it also comes with some challenges, like unavailability of papers, books, and other resources in English, rather in one of Sámi languages, or in one of the dominant cultures' languages. The language barrier has also kept me from meeting some *duojárs*, or talking to other ones, therefore taking away some learning opportunities.

7. Conclusions

Artistic expression cannot be contained within national borders or cultural belonging. Artistic influences have always gone above and beyond these constructs. In times of heightened cultural awareness, the issues of cultural appropriation and cross-cultural artistic expression have become a reoccurring public dispute, and the fear of offending a person or a group of people is stopping artists from creating something that may be deemed sensitive or inappropriate.

Being an immigrant, I find it impossible to constrain my receptiveness to new influences. That was probably the reason why I initially reacted so strongly to the novelty of *yoik*, which led me further down the road of exploring the similarities of what I intuitively knew and what I was getting to know – Slavic and Sami handicrafts. After an initial dig into topical literature, I have started my exploration. Through artistic research, staying in touch with my responses to the process, I have created 8 pieces merging the two cultures into a coherent whole, which were supplemented by a booklet with short stories and references. I aimed for my process to hopefully be a good practice example. The ideas that formed during the process were evaluated or re-evaluated during the cultural immersion process during my traineeship as an illustrator at the *Arctic Indigenous Sámi Archives* project in Anár.

Having the ethical understanding of controversy of working with Indigenous cultures, I have listened to my own emotional response during the trial and error artistic research process. In my study, I attempted to prove that it is possible (and inevitable) to use the inspiration from a new culture in one's art in an inoffensive way. It could be done by getting familiar with the pre-existing community guidelines, humbly acknowledging and stating one's relation to that culture, consulting the community, and respecting their opinion, getting a free informed prior consent when using direct "extracts" from the culture, and crediting the rightful knowledge holders. That would ideally result in fruitful work, appreciated by the community members.

My own creative process and its aftermath consisted of rather chaotic work sessions in random time intervals over three year research. I found it impossible to contain my research plan within the conventional schedules, and methods. The ideas constantly popping up in my mind throughout the duration of the project have kept on interfering with the initial "plans": for the artworks,

for the timetables, for the study itself. Nonetheless every part of the process: the surfacing of new ideas, new insights, new experiences, and interactions were all valuable inputs. Documenting this disorganised process would not be feasible with any of the conventional methods of research. For that reason artistic research has been a perfect fit for this research.

Despite not being initially sold on the idea of conducting research by making art, I must admit that retrospectively I cannot imagine a method that would fit this research better. Due to the topic of the research, and specifically its transcultural inclusion of Sámi culture, there are not many examples of similar efforts, let alone good practice examples. It would be impossible to find the insights I did, without the first-hand experience. The work style which I practised throughout the research could be put in the category of “going with the flow”. I let the process lead me. I let the thoughts interfere. I let the plans change. It is usually my preferred way of working, but I wish that I have managed to contain my ideas into a more fixed schedule and plan. It would most likely end with completely different results, as it would take away a major part of the reflection time and filter– traineeship at Sámi Archives. It gave me the understanding of the true transcultural experience by serving as cultural immersion in the Indigenous area, and the Indigenous workplace. And for that reason, I think it was worth it in the end.

The experience and the thoughts that came with it were not exclusively professional though. Living in Sápmi was the single best thing that has happened to me. The cultural and natural environment of the place has kept me fascinated and growing attached to the place. Living in Anár for only 3 months was a bit challenging socially, as people are rather hesitant to engage with others who they know will leave, but I managed to make wonderful connections that will last for life.

Due to the possibility of coming off as culturally appropriative, the research was initially placed in an ethical grey area. The study was not clearly wrongful or rightful from the very beginning. Throughout the process I have continued consulting with members of community, and with the community guidelines (Guttorm & Porsanger, 2012; Kuokkanen, 2008; Nordin Jonsson, 2012), stayed receptive to my own feelings about the process and to the wisdom of the supervisors, and stayed mindful the academic context. This has hopefully, and to my perception, shifted the artistic part of the research to not be considered cultural appropriation, and ethically “green”. The process of integrating the new culture within me has changed the perception of the artworks from

being intercultural to being transcultural. Initially the motifs and patterns have existed in me separately making the relationship between them intercultural, but creating the hybrid universe has shifted my perception of the elements of these two cultures into one single transcultural system. That perception may be different, though, for a viewer who is specifically familiar with only one of the cultures and is able to pick up the individual elements.

The research aimed to show that not all art created in between two or more cultures is appropriate, and that there are sensitive ways of engaging in transcultural arts that use Indigenous knowledge. I strived to create simple tips for others to follow. This will hopefully prevent inexperienced artists from accidentally appropriating the culture. I hope the artists who want to engage in inter- or transcultural projects in a sensitive manner will look into this research and find helpful guidelines and ethical considerations. I feel that this study should not be the last one on the topic, as cultural awareness is increasing in our society, and what was considered ethically rightful, may, in a couple of years, become universally offensive. I wish for this conversation to stay afloat. When in contact with another culture, being inspired with it, whether or not it is Indigenous, is inevitable. But in the case of the Indigenous cultures, it is worthy to remember, that at the end of the day, it is the Indigenous Peoples who are the knowledge owners, and it is them who should give out the access to their culture and right to decide how it is presented.

When finalising this report of my continuous research, I will stay open to the feedback from anyone interested. I wish to continue learning and growing, and for that, the conversation is needed.

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n.d. – no date

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Appendix 1

1. PINK

Landscape: somewhere in Lower Silesia, photo: misia siennicka.

Solju / risku – Sámi brooch

An inherent element of female gákti, part of Sámi silver work tradition. Born in times of Renaissance, and influenced by jewellery traditions of surrounding areas



Brooch: Erica Huuva Design
www.ericahuuvadesign.com

Wycinanka – Papercutting

A craft popularized in Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine in 1800s. Wycinanki from Łowicz are the most popular folk patterns in Poland.



Wycinanka łowicka: Wiesława Wojda,
 Krystyna Czubak, Halina Bartos or Emilia
 Siejka
www.sztuka-lowicka.com

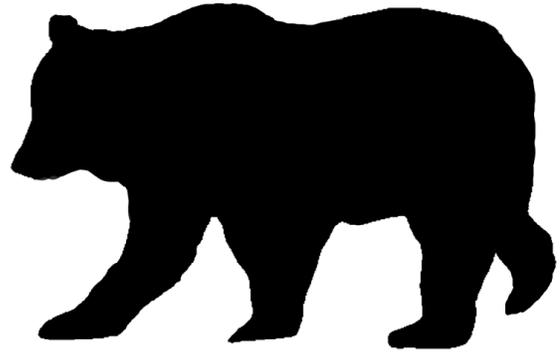
2. RED

Landscape: Jyppyrä, Hetta, Enontekiö, photo: misia siennicka.

Bear

An important symbol in traditional Sámi and Slavic beliefs. In Sámi belief system bear spirit connects gods and people, in Slavic belief system it is a symbol of Volos god. There is also a belief of a punishment for misbehavior – turnskin bear.

Image: misia siennicka



Krajka

Polish weaved belt, this particular pattern was used in the area of Białystok.

Krajka: Pluta, A., & Wiśniewska, E. (2019). *Krajka. Sokólska tkanina ludowa*. Podlaskie Muzeum Kultury Ludowej.



Vuoddagat

Part of Sámi gákti, used to wrap around shoes. This particular one is a female vuoddagat from Sør-Troms area.

Vuoddagat: Anna Ciućka Sjursen
www.instagram.com/annak.sjursen



3. ORANGE

Landscape: forest near Podgórna waterfall, Przesieka, Poland, photo: misia siennicka.

Gákti

Decorative patterns may be found on gákti from multiple different areas, colours and patterns are specific for each family. Different patterns may be seen on gákti from different areas.



In the photo: Nils Torbjörn Nutti
Photo: Lola Akinmade Åkerström
www.hiddencompass.net/story/draped-in-reverence/

Traditional Kraków costume

Decorative patterns may be found in multiple different traditional costumes in Poland, frequently in Kraków and Lublin

picture: Andrzej Siennicki
source of costume unknown



4. YELLOW

Landscape: Baltic Sea in Niechorze, Poland, photo: misia siennicka.

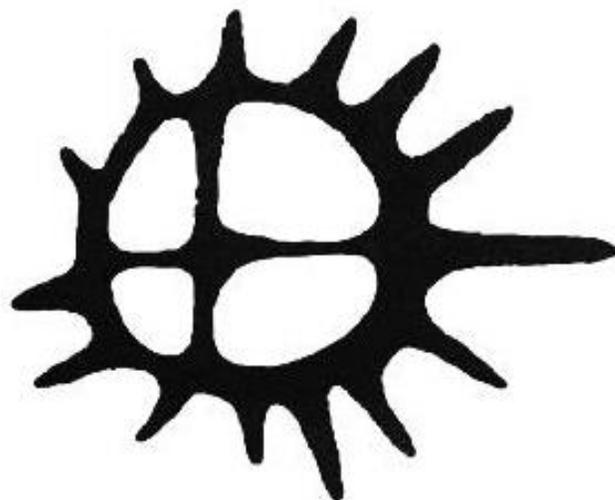
Beaivi

Sámi sun wheel is representative of the sun goddess Beaivi, often seen on noaidi drums. This particular one was discovered on ancient petroglyphs.

Sun wheel: ancient petroglyphs

Source of the image:

<https://sanseakademiet.no/our-logo/>



Swarzyca

Slavic sun wheel, a symbol of Svarog - god of Sun, celestial fire and blacksmithing

Source of the image:

<https://blog.slowianskibestiariusz.pl/symbol-e/kolowrot/>

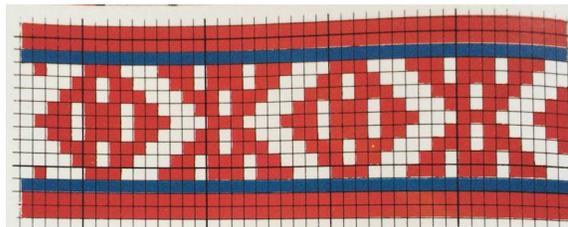


5. GREEN

Landscape: Samotnia, Karpacz, Poland, photo: misia siennicka.

Vuoddagat

Weaved band, part of Sámi gákti, used to wrap around shoes.



Source of pattern:

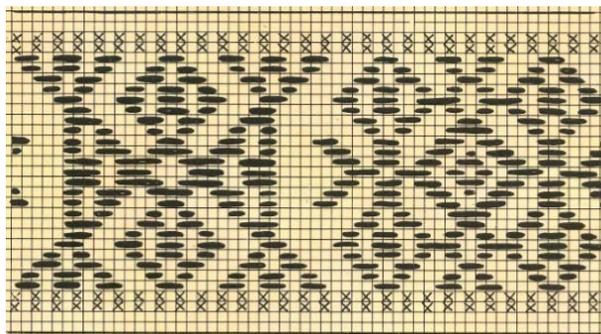
<https://www.paivatar.com/2016/skalleband.htm/men-9-43-a>

6. BLUE

landscape: Niilesjärvi, Oulu, Finland, photo: misia siennicka

Vuoddagat

Weaved band, part of Sámi gákti, used to wrap around shoes. this particular pattern is used as male vuoddagat by Fell Sámi.



Source of pattern: Jomppanen, K., Hänninen, K. & Lukkari, P. (1982). *Lapin käsitöitä: Sami kiehtatuojik*. WSOY.

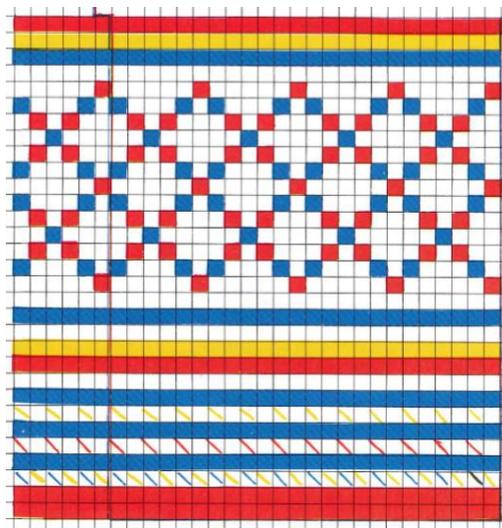
7. PURPLE

landscape: Bartošovice, Czech Republic / Niemojów, Poland, photo: misia siennicka.

Sámi duodji

Sámi handcrafted glove pattern from East Sámi community.

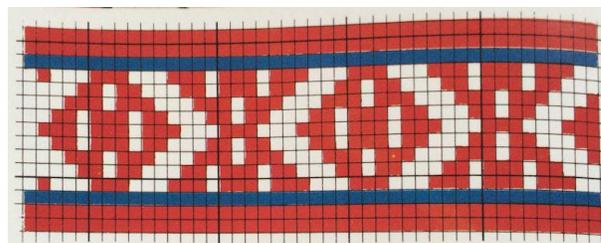
Source of pattern: Must, N. (1991). *Øst-samiske vottemønstre*. [N. Must].



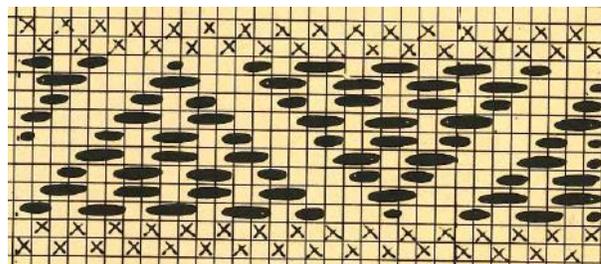
8. GREY

Vuoddagat

Source of pattern:
<https://www.paivatar.com/2016/skalleband.htm/men-9-43-a>

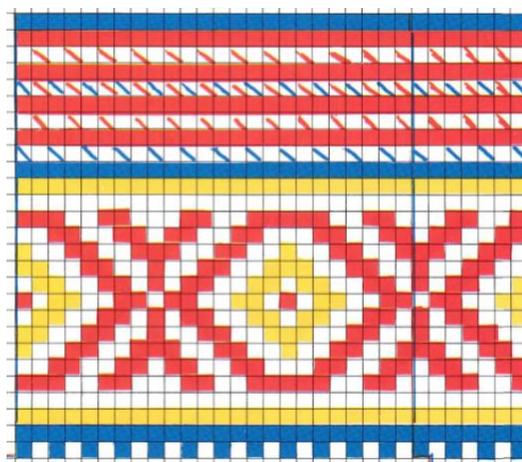


Source of pattern: Jomppanen, K., Hänninen, K. & Lukkari, P. (1982). *Lapin käsitöitä: Sami kiehtatuojik*. WSOY.



Sámi handicrafted glove pattern from East Sámi community

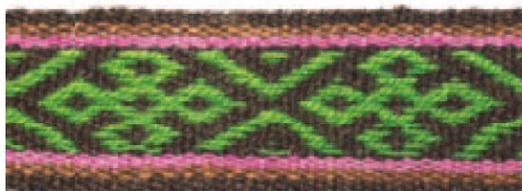
source of pattern: Must, N. (1991). *Øst-samiske vottemønstre*. [N. Must]



Krajka

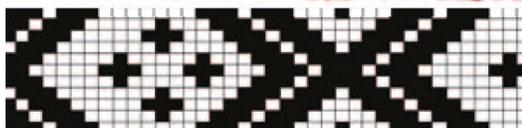
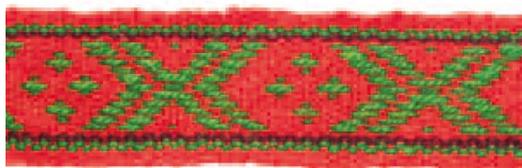
By: Amelia Trochimowska from Marchelówka.

Krajka: Pluta, A., Wiśniewska, E. (2019) *Krajka. Sokólska tkanina ludowa*. Podlaskie Muzeum Kultury Ludowej.



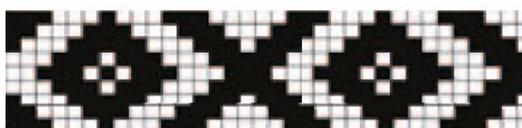
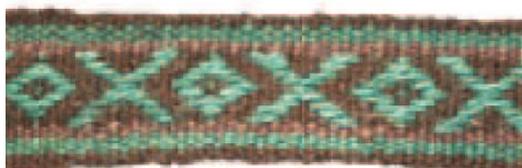
By: Monika Lasota from Skindzierz.

Krajka: Pluta, A., Wiśniewska, E. (2019) *Krajka. Sokólska tkanina ludowa*. Podlaskie Muzeum Kultury Ludowej.



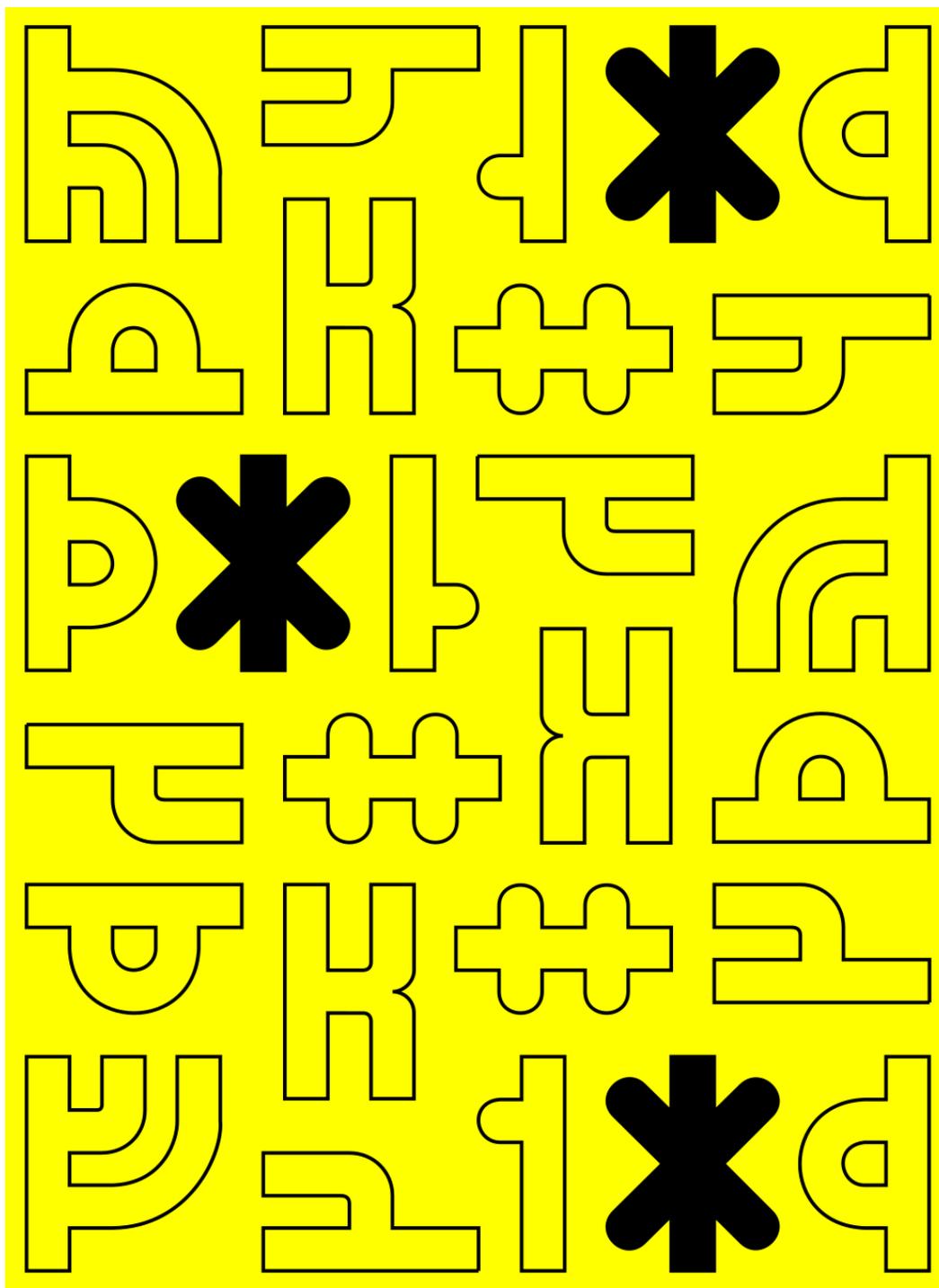
By: Wiktoria Kuderewska from Hołodolina.

Krajka: Pluta, A., Wiśniewska, E. (2019) *Krajka. Sokólska tkanina ludowa*. Podlaskie Muzeum Kultury Ludowej.



Appendix 2

misia siennicka **_traineeship report**



sámi archives **_ arctic indigenous design archives**

My name is Misia Siennicka, I am a third year student of Arctic Art and Design Programme at University of Lapland, with a background in Architecture. I had a pleasure to receive a Traineeship Voucher from the University for the year 2021. The following report will cover my traineeship experience at Arctic Indigenous Design Archives by the Sámi Archives in Inari, which started on 1st of June, and ended on the 31st of August 2021, the time during which I have learned a lot ethically, culturally and skill-wise.

Arctic Indigenous Design Archives is a collaborative project between Sámi Archives, which are a part of National Archives of Finland, Ájtte - Swedish Mountain and Sámi Museum in Jokkmokk, Sweden, and Sámi Allaskuvla - Sámi Applied Science University in Kautokeino, Norway. The project was first funded in 2017 as AIDA I for three years, and revived in 2020 as AIDA II. For now the project's collaborators and donors are all institutions and duojárs (Sámi crafters, designers and artists) based in Sapmi (Sámi homeland), therefore for now the core of the project is Sámi design culture. During the AIDA I part of the project the Duojár Archives have been established, a place where duojárs can donate the materials they find suitable for the tradition and spirit of duodji making be preserved; moreover courses and student projects have been introduced and pedagogical materials meritoric side prepared.

The project which I was part of for the summer of 2021 - AIDA II - Archives and Actors, was a continuation of the first one, and its aim is to answer the following questions:

- How can duojárs, students, researchers and other users of the archives get access to the materials in new ways?
- How can archives be “Indigenized” and adapted to Indigenous Peoples’ worldview and Sámi practices?

The answers to these questions are searched for using a mix of various different methods, from launching of a portal for searching for Indigenous Archival Data, to “Indigenized” ways of communicating with donors/duojárs, organizing conferences, creating audiovisual materials which introduce the basic concepts, and many more.

Being a summer trainee at Arctic Indigenous Design Archives means also being a part of a bigger group of summer trainees for National Archives of Finland, and experiencing the working schemes and systems of governmental organizations. As a trainee for the AIDA project I have been assigned many various tasks, from research and solution finding for designing online resources/websites for the colourblind users, translating and analyzing the educational materials, which had been briefly sketched out by Sunna Valkeapää during AIDA I project, digitizing newly submitted Archives, and finally preparing visual identification and materials for the upcoming conference “Indigenous Archives - Today and Tomorrow”. As a trainee of the National Archives of Finland I had been expected to attend biweekly virtual meetings with other trainees during which we went through our progress in

work, but also have listened to presentations by the senior employees of the National Archives and learned about various projects, and general information about organization's functioning.

On the following pages I will go over each of the tasks assigned to me separately, I will show some of my work's results and end the report with a conclusion of what I've learned and the thoughts that I have had during the traineeship and how they changed throughout.

WORKING AS A TRAINEE FOR THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF FINLAND

Working for a governmental organization has been a great opportunity both for my growth, but also an exemplary case of good workplace treatment. The way that the work and workers are organized within the company is clear, but despite the many hierarchy levels in the institution the interpersonal communication is quite relaxed, but that may be the location specific characteristic.

When becoming a part of a governmental organization I had been provided with all necessary tools for doing my job - a work computer and a phone. There had already been an email address and intranet account waiting for me. After arriving at the workplace the supervisors taught me how to use these platforms: how to sign in to work in the morning, how to contact IT services if I needed help with my software/hardware, how to reach any other employees of the archives (and other governmental organizations, it turned out possible and I've accidentally reached people from different institutions about my IT problems), etc.

I have spent the first days of the work preparing short introductions about myself for various outlets, like the intranet page, henkilöhaku on the intranet server and project's homepage (ex. <https://arkisto.fi/aida/blog/35/280/Cze%C5%9B%C4%87-Moikka>). I found this personal treatment quite unusual for an organization this big, but it was a pleasant surprise.

Working for the National Archives of Finland comes with (a more or less) obligatory participation in some national level meetings: biweekly meetings of summer trainees and monthly (during the summer) meetings with a supervisor stationed in Helsinki. All of the meetings were held in Finnish, which was sometimes difficult for me, but in the end worked out. Meetings with supervisors were mostly meant for the board to make sure that our Inari team is doing the job that we are meant to, so it was each and every person giving a little update on their current work, and what they had done since the last meeting. Trainee meetings were at first a way to meet each

other and learn about different sections of the National Archives, during the first 2 or 3 meetings everybody introduced themselves, and after learning their tasks, talked about their own expectations of the upcoming months. During the later meetings we were introduced to the topics that we have voted for, for example “Finns in Russia” project of the National Archives. All trainees had been given a date, for which they had to prepare a presentation about their work, to update the others on what they were doing. As my work was very different from all the other trainees who did more traditionally archival or office jobs, I found it nice to present my current work, be asked questions about it and answer them to the best of my abilities.

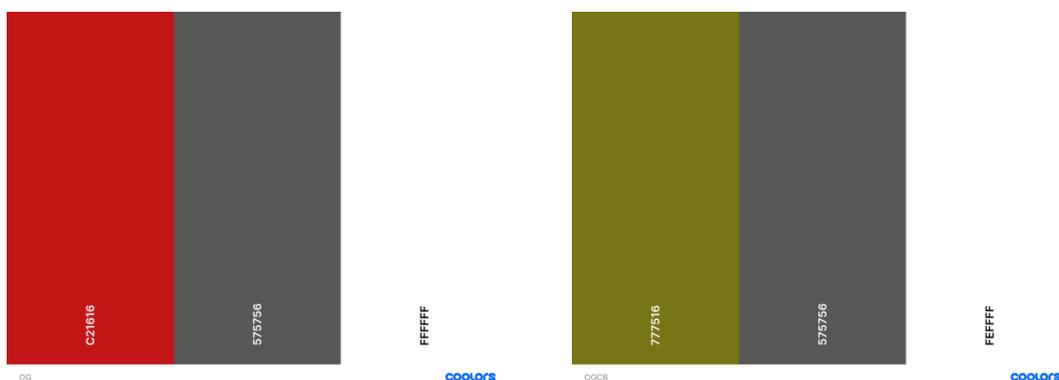


The other side of working for such an organization is also exemplary treatment of the employee. Being paid as a trainee should be given, but unfortunately is not the case in many situations, and as a governmental organization Archives are setting a good example for other companies to follow. Every employee can go to a relaxation room if they find it necessary, if they feel bad they can go home, and as it is allowed I saw that no one abuses that opportunity; and doctor visits or vaccination appointments don't have to be made up for in overtime. All these things make the working environment less stressful, and at least to me, more motivating, than hectic spaces, with deadlines, and the stress of every second away from the desk having to be worked off.

PRODUCING MATERIALS FOR COLOUR-BLIND USERS - A RESEARCH

One of my first assignments after joining the AIDA team for the summer of 2021 has been a little research project about designing websites for the colour-blind users, as online accessibility is one of the governmental requirements. Government provides the projects and institutions with general guidelines and tools for achieving this, but unfortunately they only mentioned accessibility for colour-blind as a requirement without saying how it should be done. In our small team of three: main researcher/project leader, project worker and me as a summer trainee, no one had any experience with this kind of a design. I found it quite valuable of an input for myself too, because I have a couple of family members who are colour-blind, and I wanted to learn how I could make things easier for them in my future projects.

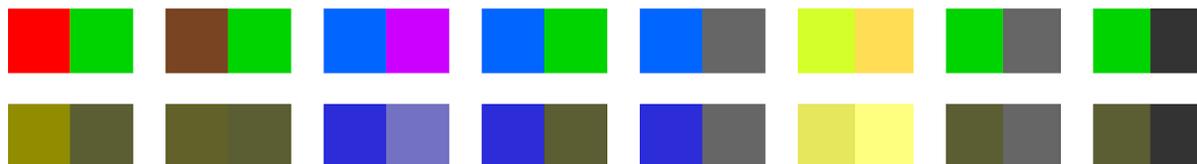
My research started with analysing our homepage, and several different websites using colour-blind filter on the browser (“Let’s get colour-blind”), trying to pinpoint the spots which may seem tricky to interact with for colour-blind users. After pinpointing the issues, which turned out to be mostly in-text links, I’ve sampled the colour palette of the website. Having the colours sampled I created palettes in the colors.co website. It gave me a better idea of what the colours looked like, and from there I could find solutions that would better the situation.



Before getting to solve the problems though I had to get an idea what are some rules that a designer should follow to make their works accessible. After thorough online research I have found 5 main rules:

- Don't only rely on colours. Use shapes or icons over the coloured buttons to avoid confusion.
- Keep the colour palette limited to 2-3 colours. The more colours, the more space for confusion.
- Use texture and patterns to show contrast. This rule is especially useful in making graphs etc.
- Carefully select any contrasting colours and shades. Complementary colours around red-green zone seem to be impossible to differentiate for colour-blind users, but through tests I have found that colour triads work really well.

- Avoid confusing colour combinations (see below).



As on our homepage for the colour-blind users the colours weren't contrasting enough, I prepared files with various solutions like: lighter shades of the accent colours in hope that it will increase the contrast, with different format of fonts and with alternative colour palettes. And thanks to the fact that I have colour-blind relatives, I could get their feedback, and ask for personal preferences when it comes to colour combinations in websites. My personal favourite was a dark yellow colour, but it turns out that colour-blind users see it as a really bright yellow, which as text on a white background becomes pretty much invisible. The best pick for the in-text highlight turns out to be a shade of blue or purple (which colour-blind users see as blue), a theory proven by one of the biggest websites there is - Facebook, of which the founder - Mark Zuckerberg is colour-blind himself.

This small research has been finalized by presenting my findings and potential ideas to the rest of the team. The further work on improving the accessibility of the home page was a task of another employee and an IT professional.

DIGITIZING ARCHIVES

Digitizing newly submitted archives was the most “Archival” task that I did during my traineeship, and also the shortest in duration. For about a week, my co-worker and I scanned the materials, and created descriptions for their contents in excel documents, which will later be submitted to the Archives Database by the Archivist. I was given part of the materials submitted by Aune Kuva, a singer, songwriter and duojár. The materials consisted of the notations and lyrics of perhaps all of the songs ever created by Aune Kuva, and gave me a good perspective of what are the main inspirations of Aune, and different musical collaborations that she’s had over the course of the past 60 years. The music and handicrafts created by Aune Kuva are not traditional by any means, the techniques used are not typical, and neither are the motives, which make her work really interesting, as it is filled with untypical Sámi perspective.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT SAMI DUODJI

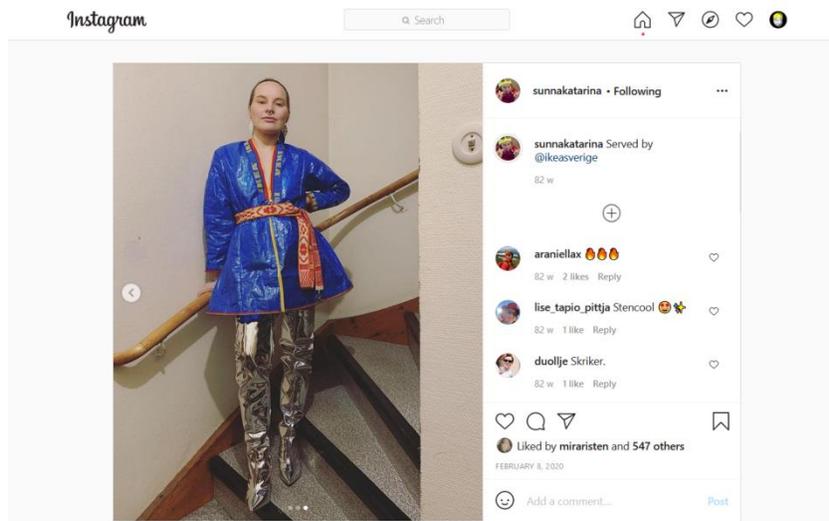
Illustrating educational materials about Sámi duodji has been my primary task during the internship. The materials had been prepared in 2017, in Sámi language by Sunna Valkeapää, and the needed illustrations had been either sketched or described on the slides. Since I do not speak Sámi, another trainee of the Sámi Archives, who is a native speaker of Northern Sámi helped me with translating the contents and image descriptions. The translating process was really valuable, as it has given me a lot of additional cultural input from a Sámi person, and spiked a lot of interesting discussions.

After completing translations of the materials, and making the list of needed drawings, the making of illustrating was an iterative process which consisted of the following stages:

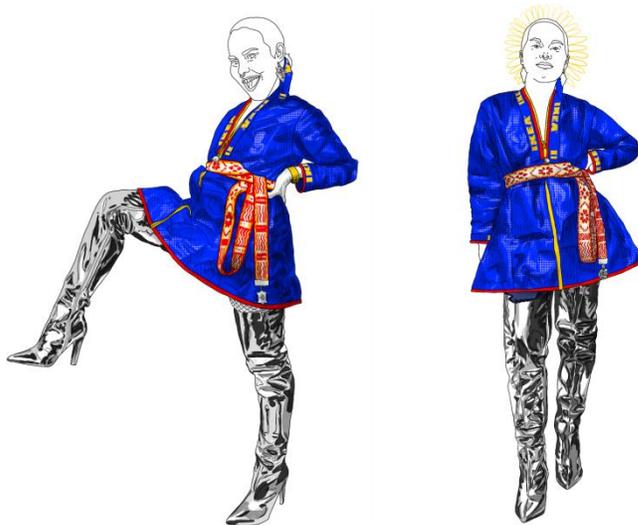
- Looking for a good reference picture for a needed image (preferably from our own archival material, or of duojárs somehow connected to the project, if not checking finna.fi or Siida Museum, and lastly other sources, which was usually various instagram pages of duojárs with no connections to the project or google image search).
- Asking permission to use images (If needed).
- Making an illustration.
- Sometimes getting back to a duojár to get a final approval of the image.
- Placing the image into its place in the presentation.

As an example let's take a slide which called for a duodji in which a creator was innovative and humoristic. I must admit that it was the trickiest one, as calling something humoristic, when it wasn't the author's intention

may end up being offensive. After lots of searching in donors' works, brainstorming with co-workers, and looking for a perfect example on various duodji instagrams, I have stumbled upon Catarina Cielatis instagram page. This young duojár from the Swedish side of Sápmi has created a gákti out of ikea bags. Which my coworkers and I both found to be exactly what we have been looking for.



I have then messaged Catarina asking if they would be interested in her work being a part of educational materials about duodji, mentioning the pictures that I would use, and what kind of image the presentation has called for. Catarina has been really excited to be part of this, so I immediately got to drawing, creating the two images below. The images had been put in the presentation and sent over to the original creator, so they are able to use it for their own purposes too.



This iteration has worked for most (around 65) of the images which I have created during the course of my traineeship. Sometimes the need for the images was different. One of the presentations already had few very advanced images created by Sunna, and they were high-contrast sketches laid over photos, so my process for these one was talking situational pictures with my co-worker and drawing these, and if impossible (as with the image that was supposed to showcase the preparing of gámas) searching for a suitable picture in the archival photos donated by SogSakk school.



From left: image by Sunna Valkeapää, based on a situational picture took with a coworker, and based on a picture donated by SogSakk

Another exception to my iterative process was the images that presented a duojar with whom the kids were supposed to identify. Sunna's sketches were based on their own looks, but I decided to make my character more inclusive, so kids of all genders, skin colours and ages could relate to it. The design I went with was a little blue character that has no characteristic features and could be anybody. The character was presented in various situations based on the previous maker's sketches.



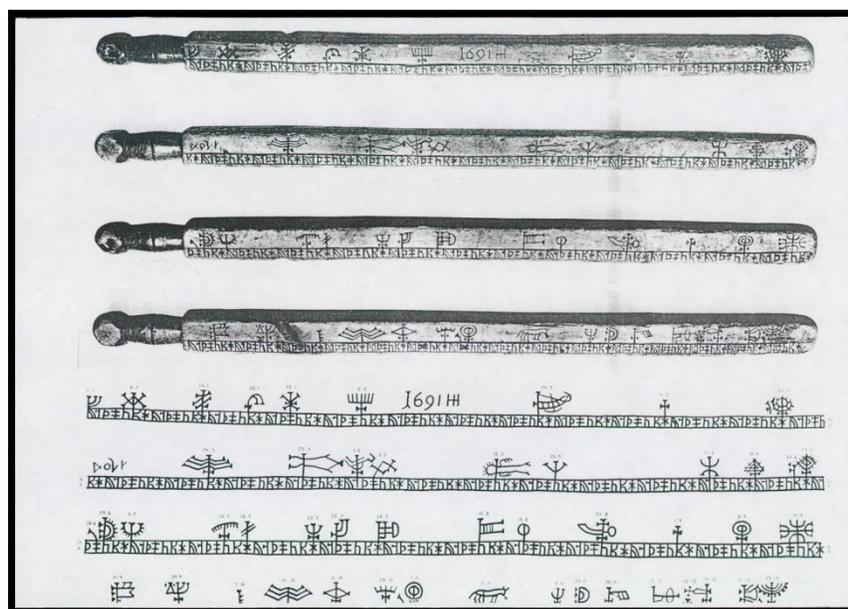
Sometimes, between the images of duodji, there would also be sketches of faces, but since they were in the presentations without the blue character, I went for pictures based on photographs I took of myself and my co-worker.



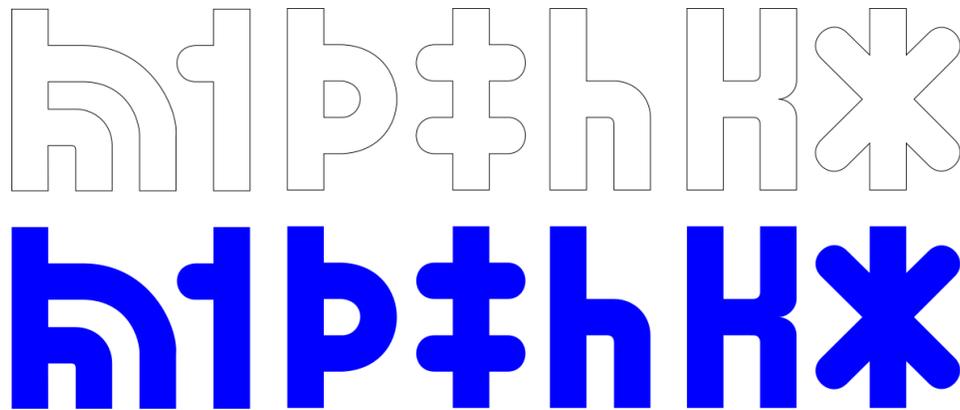
During the 3 month traineeship I managed to complete the illustrations for all the presentations, and even though it may seem like a very repetitive and uncreative task, I learned a lot about Sámi duodji, and about right ways of accessing the Indigenous knowledge, and using it in a way that benefits the community. During making of these presentations (which will be available on AIDA's homepage) I had a chance to discuss many topics, visit museums and duojárs at their workshops, and learn about many talented creators. I will talk more about the ethical side of it in the summary of my traineeship.

VISUAL MATERIALS FOR THE “INDIGENOUS ARCHIVES - TODAY AND TOMORROW” CONFERENCE

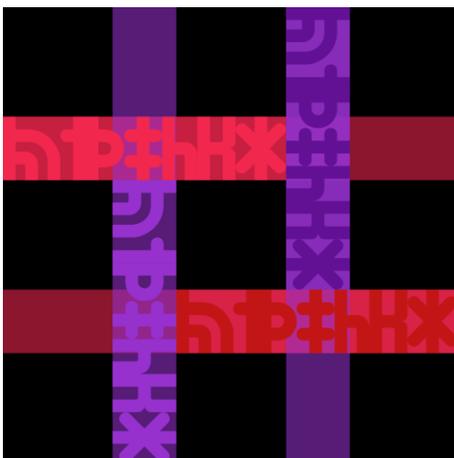
Making visual materials for the “Indigenous Archives - Today and Tomorrow” was a really interesting and challenging task. The concept of time included in the title of the conference gave me an opportunity for learning more about Sámi perception of time, and its different representations. During the process I’ve talked to my co-workers, and searched the sources for different ideas, both Sámi and western. My initial idea was to create a matrix of time of sorts, and I tried to achieve it with linear designs inspired by Outi Pieski’s “Cuolmmadit” installation. There was a problem with this rhetoric though, as the Sámi idea of time is circular rather than linear, and Indigenous Archives are not about keeping the timeline straight but preserving the culture, and interweaving past and present into the future. Some ideas that my co-worker suggested I keep in mind were that “present affects past”, “future is already decided” and “everything is happening at the same time”, she (a non-Sámi) was also kind enough to explain to me her own understanding of Sámi time after living in the community for couple of years, the concept was 4 overlapping circles (main seasons) contained within one bigger, the 4 interjecting shapes representing the transition seasons creating a 4 petal flower - a pattern which in a variation is commonly used by duojárs from for example Laiti family (Samekki, Ilmari, Patteri). The solution to my divagations came from Ilmari Laiti’s Archive. A picture presented below is a copy of a page from a book (possibly: Hampusson Huldt, H. (1920) *Mönsterbok för lapsk hemslöjd i Västerbottens län. Schmidts boktryckeri. Sweden*), which shows a XVII century Sámi calendar, there were couple of different pages which showed that the patterns used in the calendars were really consistent, always using the same symbol for weekdays (the baseline of the pattern) and for some special events (patterns above the baseline).



I really liked the idea of using the XVII century calendar as the main motive in my design; it seemed like something that could be matrixed. I tried a couple of different designs where I tried to keep the pattern linear and have many of these separate “timelines” overlap, but it proved itself unsuccessful. I turned the pattern into these linear shapes:

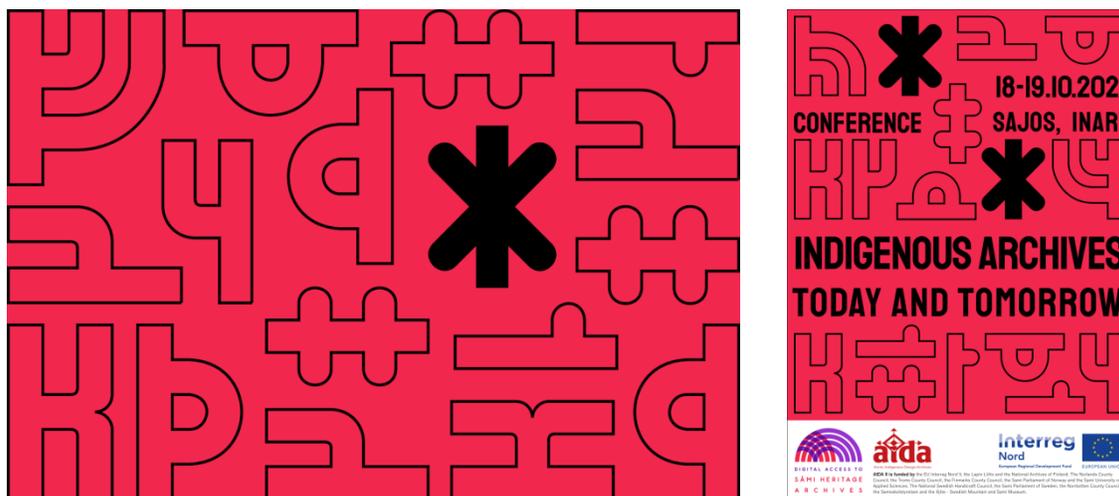


After creating the shapes I tried overlapping them on a grid, like in a pattern used by South Sámi duojárs. A grid like that, if put horizontally and vertically is representing strength, and diagonally flexibility, it is commonly used as a pattern on knives and scabbards (in a picture below on a little bone piece on the right side). Using the grid pattern is quite controversial though, as even Sámi creators who don't belong to the South Sámi group are advised not to use it, to avoid cultural appropriation. Even though the pattern seems like a quite popular motif outside Sápmi, and may also be interpreted as weaved textile, after consulting with Gunvor Guttorm, I've decided not to use it.



From Nils-Johan Labba Archives

After days of experimenting with different patterns I decided to create a simple duo-chromatic collage created with the “weekday” symbols. It was an ideal representation of the archival material, and especially archival material in the times of digitization - points in time thrown together into a space, in which they interact and influence each other. The colours have been picked from the palette inspired by AIDA and Digital Access to Sámi Heritage Archives logos. The final decision on the colours and design (which I have prepared quite a lot of) has been given to the board of AIDA PROJECT - Inker-Anni Linkola-Aikio, Anna Westman and Gunvor Guttorm. I am really proud of the achieved results, and I am looking forward to seeing it on social media and in physical spaces when their publishing time comes.



This project has been a great opportunity for me to learn to work with the archival materials, and get inspired by it. Although it might have been tricky from an ethical perspective, my co-workers/supervisors had always been there to advise, and share their expertise on these subjects.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Working at an Indigenous organization as a non-Sámi person was not always an easy task, the ethical questions of my work had been coming up a lot, and a lot of measures had to be taken so it is not accused of cultural appropriation. From the very first day of working with the illustrations I learned about the neutral representations of duodjis in a way, which would not be appropriative. Some of the rules I followed were:

- If a duojar gave permission to use their duodji, any patterns visible on it have to be copied exactly like they are on the original; no creative input from myself is allowed. As an example a matchbox by Patteri Laiti.



- If a work has been found in a public domain or space: finna.fi, Siida museum, Sajos center, any patterns visible on the duodji have to be removed, since they are usually family specific and easily recognizable by the members of the community. As an example gietkka with all weaved belts stripped off of the patterns.



The fear of breaking these rules, and accidentally doing something inappropriate, (although my whole process has been supervised by another non-Sámi creator, who had learned over the years how to keep their art and craft neutral) had led me to thinking that my job is unethical at the very core. I didn't let this impact my work, but I found it quite distressing, as we had frequently had conversations about what was and was not fine for me to draw, and it seemed to be very limiting. Finding a good balance and changing the mind-set to believing that I am doing something that will, in a long run, benefit the community, was a long process, for which I had to talk to my supervisor, to be sure that I am not doing something that will later be found offensive.

I think that this experience led me to a better understanding of how a non-Sámi person can use Indigenous knowledge without it crossing any lines, but also how to collaborate with other creators. I have learned a lot about duodji itself, about processes of making it, and tools used for it. Going through the presentations and attending some meetings and talks gave me more insight into the spirit of duodji, and its connection to nature.

Living in Inari gave me a chance to meet a lot of wonderful people, who all are deeply connected to the environment in different ways. I had found the nature of Sápmi hypnotizing myself, and I think that my connection to nature has never been stronger. The fragile ecosystems, low annual growth of plants, and the thought of harsh conditions of Northern winter that they have to live through, gave me an incredible lot of respect for all the animate and inanimate nature of that area. The mind-set of protecting nature and the environment is the one thing that I think people of the North all share. And this mind set has been stronger in me than ever, which made coming back to Rovaniemi really difficult. I have started noticing things in here like: sound pollution from the roads, trash on the parking lots, roads and lawns, the amount of unnecessary objects people are made to believe that they need has been really overwhelming, after living a simple life in the North, where one doesn't need anything more than what is available.

Overall summer in Inari has been a life changing event for me. I have grown a lot as a creator, as an empath, as a naturalist, I learned a lot about the culture, nature and work ethics. My perspective of what I can achieve in life changed completely, and I think I grew a better understanding of what I want to do. I grew really attached to this in a middle of nowhere place and I hope I could go back there sometime, and continue this journey.