

Press Release

SÁMI ART EXHIBITION ON LAND, NATURE, AND ACTIVISM

From 7 May, Wereldmuseum Leiden presents *Sámi Art, Land, Power*, an exhibition featuring work by Sámi artists from the Sápmi region (northern Scandinavia and Russia). Visual art, fashion, craft, and video portraits are combined with unique items from the collection, collectively demonstrating how creativity has always been a source of culture, knowledge, and resistance for the Sámi – the only Indigenous people in Europe recognised by the United Nations. At a time when debates about climate change, natural resources, and land rights are becoming increasingly urgent, *Sámi Art, Land, Power* offers a powerful perspective from Sápmi – where art, land, and sovereignty are inextricably linked.



Still of video Ceagganaddat, Listening with Foremother, 2023, by Biret Haarla Pieski and Outi Pieski

Central to the exhibition is the relationship between art and Sápmi: the homeland of the Sámi, stretching across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia's Kola Peninsula. For the Sámi, land is not an abstract concept, but a living relationship encompassing history, language, spirituality, and community. This connection resonates throughout many of the works in *Sámi Art, Land, Power*. The artists link traditional and contemporary making practices to pressing questions around land rights, colonial legacies, and environmental stewardship, serving as cultural and political voices.

Art as a political landscape

The artists in the exhibition use the landscape as a site of memory, conflict, and cultural restoration. Their works address ongoing tensions around land use in Sápmi, where mining, energy projects, and state policies regularly clash with Sámi ways of life. These activities disrupt

reindeer migration routes, natural ecosystems, and the Sámi's spiritual relationship with the land. At the same time, the landscape is also a place where artists work towards cultural renewal: reclaiming and strengthening languages, knowledge, and traditions that have long been under pressure.

In the paintings of Anders Sunna, the Sámi landscape becomes a political battleground. He weaves together personal family histories with a critique of state policies on land use and reindeer herding. His monumental work *Justice in the Forest* combines painting with wooden elements that refer to duodji, the centuries-old Sámi craft tradition rooted in the creation of everyday functional objects with a keen sense of aesthetics.

Britta Marakatt-Labba has also played a key role in the development of contemporary Sámi art. Through her intricate embroidered works, she depicts historical events, mythology, and everyday scenes from life in Sápmi. Her work has been instrumental in shaping a generation of artists who have repositioned Sámi creativity within the international art world.



Anders Sunna, *Wind is the Last Witness, 2025_Sámi Art, Land, Power*

Between duodji and dáidda

Among the Sámi, there has traditionally been no strict division between art and craft. Traditional handicraft – duodji – is made by a duojár, a skilled maker with in-depth knowledge of natural materials and the landscapes from which they originate. Many contemporary artists build on these traditions. The works in *Sámi Art, Land, Power* engage with the Wereldmuseum collection, in which Sámi objects and duodji have long been represented. While the collection shows how materials, techniques, and knowledge of the land have been passed down through generations, contemporary artists demonstrate how these traditions take on new forms and meanings. Works from the museum's own collection and the loans connect past and present, revealing how Sámi creativity continues to evolve.

The Finnish artist Outi Pieski, for instance, incorporates Sámi textile traditions and jewellery into her installations and photographic works, in which women's knowledge and collective memory take centre stage. In doing so, Pieski creates space for previously suppressed knowledge about women and their place in society. Olof Marsja also brings duodji into a contemporary artistic context through his sculptures, in which glass, sound, and installation come together. His work reflects on Sámi identity and on how traditional forms acquire new meanings in a contemporary context.

Sámi Art, Land, Power combines works from the Wereldmuseum collection and loans from artists. The result is a layered view of Sámi creativity: from historical objects and crafted pieces to contemporary installations, videos, and paintings. Together, these works show how Sámi art today functions as both a cultural and political voice. At a time when debates about climate change, natural resources, and land rights are becoming increasingly urgent, *Sámi Art, Land, Power* offers a powerful perspective from Sápmi – where art, land, and sovereignty are inextricably linked.



Britta Marakatt-Labba, Zonder titel, 2011

Artists

Britta Marakatt-Labba

Outi Pieski

Anders Sunna

Ingunn Utsi

Olof Marsja

Hilde Skancke Pedersen

Lars Pirak

Inga Nordsletta Pedersen

Ramona Salo

Biret Hætta

Paulus Mikael Khumonen

Johan Andersen

Perisak Juuso

Monica Edmondson

Sámi Art, Land, Power

From 7 May 2026 to 5 September 2027

Wereldmuseum Leiden