

Knife, sheath, *náhppi*, and *guottahat* (with knife, scissor and *nállogoahti*)

Artist: Johan Rist

Year: 1983

A glass case by the entrance at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science-building contains objects that captivates the eye and creates a desire to touch. Hard materials, like wood, has taken on the texture of smooth velvet – and rough materials, like branched horns, materialize as sleek and gleaming through the exquisite artistry of Johan Rist.

The items displayed, a large knife, a *náhppi* or bowl for milking reindeer, and a *guottahat* (a bone disc with utensils hanging from leather straps: a smaller knife, a scissor and a *nállogoahti* or a needle case), are tools for the hand – they accommodate usage in a context of Sami knowledge, at the same time as they are the product of such expertise.

Clever details demonstrate deep practical and material know-how. Like the slit in the sheath for the knife, allowing moist to slip through to prevent the steel from corroding if the blade is wet. Some features might point to regional traditions, for example the sharply bent sheath, occasionally associated with northern Sami knives, or the meticulously carved ornamental pattern (highlighted with a mix of grease and soot or black-lead to contrast the bright-coloured horn). Moreover, an informed viewer might recall the characteristic clicking sound, sometimes heard when a knife is pressed down into the sheath, a token of a well-executed work, or gauge the size of the *náhppi* and how it correlates with the relative size of an (imagined) doe herd.

Resting behind sheets of glass, preventing touch and prioritizing the gaze, the art works still mediates different experiences, references and epistemologies. Reminding the bystanders of the multitudes of art-worlds, life-worlds and knowledge systems, both inside and outside of academia.

Johan Rist's works have been acquired by major institutions in Sápmi. He was born in 1937 in Eanodat (Finland), growing up in Siebe (Norway), he now lives in Lismá (Finland) working as a reindeer herder and a *duojár*.

Further readings

Guttorm, Gunvor, *Duoji bálgát - en studie i duodji: kunsthåndverk som visuell erfaring hos et urfolk*, Tromsø: Universitetet i Tromsø, 2001.

Kihlberg, Kurt, *Duodji - slöjdens mästare: en bok om den magiska sameslöjden/Masters of Sami handicraft: a book about the magic Sami handicraft*, Rosvik: Forlaget Nordkallotten, 2003.

Kveseth, Magne, “Grenseløs duodje-kunst», *Altaposten*, 07.04.2017, p. 19.

Oskal, Nils, “The character of the milk bowl as a separate world, and the world as a multitudinous totality of references”, in Marit Hauan (ed.), *Sámi stories: art and identity of an Arctic people*, Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk 2014, p. 79–89.

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