

PRESS RELEASE

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A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts

Act 1: Reykjavik, Iceland, March 24 – April 16, 2006

Act 2: Nuuk, Greenland, April 21 – May 14, 2006

Act 3: Tórshavn, The Faroe Islands, May 12 – June 4, 2006

Act 4: Rovaniemi, Sápmi/Finland, June 16 – July 9, 2006

Act 5: DVD Box Set Launch in Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo & Stockholm, November 25, 2006

Curated by Kuratorisk Aktion (Frederikke Hansen & Tone Olaf Nielsen) for NIFCA, Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art

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Nordic Amnesia

*The colonial history of the Nordic region is a dark chapter that seems to have slipped the memory of some of the Nordic populations. A comprehensive exhibition project titled **Rethinking Nordic Colonialism: A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts** will shed light over this memory loss and at the same time show that lines can be drawn from the colonialism of former times and contemporary problems of intolerance, xenophobia, and nationalism in the Nordic countries today. NIFCA, The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art, has initiated this visionary project, which combines exhibitions with workshops, conferences, hearings, and happenings in the locations of Iceland, Greenland, The Faroe Islands, and the Sámi area of Finland. 56 internationally recognized artists, theorists, politicians, and grassroots activists from all over the world participate in the project, which runs from March 24 – November 25, 2006.*

Colonialism

For centuries, the European nations have seized new foreign territories and exploited them, disregarding that these territories were already inhabited. Where colonialism has interfered in the native societies, great destruction and oppression has resulted. When European colonialism was at its height in the 1930s, it covered 84 percent of the world. The colonial history of the Nordic region must be seen in relation to this process, where in keeping with a hegemonic mindset it was thought justifiable to colonize other peoples and extracting more riches from the colonies than was being returned.

A Postcolonial Nordic Region

Even if the Nordic colonies are (almost) dismantled, colonialism is not a closed chapter. The region today could be said to be in a postcolonial state with clear traces of colonialism. In the former

colonies, one can encounter frustration at not being heard, understood, and respected, as well as split feelings towards the colonizers of the past. Among those former colonizers, on the other hand, one can encounter romantic and trivializing conceptions of the colonial era, for instance the idea that colonization was a gift to the native people, who were provided wealth, development, and skills.

Intentions

Rethinking Nordic Colonialism revisits the colonial past of the Nordic countries in order to locate the root of some of the hierarchies, inequalities, and intolerances that structure the Nordic societies today. In addition, the project wants to show that the region's postcolonial state also provides a breeding ground for cultural clashes and short-circuits, which in turn lead to new qualities and values. Qualities and values that are often overlooked, but which nonetheless pose fruitful alternatives to existing values.

A Remarkable Project

This project is a first attempt at writing a comprehensive history of Nordic colonialism. It is the first of its kind in the region and remarkable in its format inasmuch as it mixes art forms such as visual and video arts, film, performance, music, and action art, with postcolonial critique and political theory. It involves all the Nordic countries and is based on extraordinary partnerships between important art and culture institutions in the region: The Living Art Museum and The Reykjavik Academy in Iceland; Greenland National Museum and Archives as well as the Teachers' Training School of Greenland in Nuuk; The Faroe Islands Art Museum and The Nordic House in Tórshavn; The Arctic Centre and Finnish Railways Remise in Rovaniemi in Northern Finland (Sápmi).

Nordic Relay Race

Rethinking Nordic Colonialism is structured as a relay race in five acts, with each of the first four acts consisting of an exhibition on a specific theme combined with a workshop, conference, hearing, or happening. Each of these acts runs three weeks and it is an inbuilt premise that each act delivers the baton to the next. The result is a continuous accumulation of experiences and a continuous communication of the project's conclusions. In the fifth act, the results of the project will be documented in a DVD Box Set, which is released on November 25, 2006 during simultaneous events in the four Nordic metropolises. These launches constitute the finishing line of the relay race.

List of Participants

M. Jacqui Alexander (works in Canada), **Pia Arke** (Greenland/Denmark), **Nadiah Bamadhaj** (Malaysia/Indonesia), **Bolette Benedictsen Blaagaard** (Denmark/The Netherlands), **Stephanie Black** (USA), **Randi Broberg in collaboration with Tine Bryld** (Greenland/Denmark & Denmark), **Center for Land Use Interpretation** (USA), **Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld** (Denmark), **Godfried Donkor** (Ghana/United Kingdom), **Anida Yoeu Esguerra** (Cambodia/USA), **Paul Gilroy** (United Kingdom), **Tamar Guimarães** (Brazil/Denmark), **Archana Hande** (India), **Laila Hansen** (Greenland), **Julie Edel Hardenberg** (Greenland), **Marja Helander** (Sámi, Finland), **Imani Henry** (The Caribbean/USA), **Richard William Hill** (Cree, Canada), **Geir Tore Holm** (Sámi, Norway), **Høgner Hoydal** (The Faroe Islands), **Inuk Silis Høegh & Asmund Havsteen-Mikkelsen** (Greenland/Denmark & Denmark), **Maryam Jafri** (Pakistan/USA/Denmark), **Ívar Jónsson** (Iceland), **Isaac Julien** (United Kingdom), **Jane Jin Kaisen & Tobias Hübinette** (South Korea/Denmark & South Korea/Sweden), **Rauna Kuokkanen** (Sámi, Finland/Canada), **Moshekwa Langa** (South Africa/The Netherlands), **Reina Lewis** (United Kingdom), **Mikela Lundahl** (Sweden), **Aviâja Egede Lynge** (Greenland), **Kobena Mercer** (Ghana/United Kingdom), **Kent Monkman** (Cree, Canada), **Rannvá Holm Mortensen** (The Faroe Islands), **New Meaning** (Norway), **Alanis Obomsawin** (Abenaki, Canada), **Steve Ouditt** (Trinidad, West Indies), **Pratibha Parmar** (Kenya/United Kingdom), **Humphrey Polepole** (Tanzania), **Gillo Pontecorvo** (Italy), **Kaisa Raitio** (Finland), **Henriette Rasmussen** (Greenland), **Ruangrupa** (Indonesia), **Vandana Shiva** (India), **Katarina Pirak Sikku** (Sámi, Sweden), **Paul-Anders Simma** (Sámi, Norway/Sweden/Finland), **Slut** (Sweden), **Makere Stewart-Harawira** (Waitaha, New Zealand/Canada), **Fatimah Tuggar** (Nigeria/USA), **200** (The Faroe Islands), **Ósk Vilhjálmsdóttir** (Iceland), **VISION – den om lighed** (Denmark), **Voima** (Finland) & **Kara Walker** (USA).