

THE ARTIST

- Elina Waage Mikalsen (b. 1992, Sápmi/Norway) is a multidisciplinary artist and musician. She works with performance, textiles, installation, text and sound.
- Her artistic work is often based on her Norwegian and Sámi background. The meeting between the Norwegian and the Sámi in her own family serves as a picture of the power relations that haunt our society as a whole. She uses her unique and intimate view of society to explore themes related to identity and exclusion.
- In 2015, Mikalsen was named Young Artist of the Year at the international indigenous festival Riddu Riđđu.



THE ARTWORK



ÁHCAGASTÁ – TALES OF THE EMBER

2022

Braided yarn, metal poles, sound and publication, dimensions variable

Collection of the artist

Commissioned in collaboration with Lofoten International Art Festival (LIAF)

Supported by Bode2024 – European Capital of Culture with a local Artist in Residency grant

- **MEDIUM:** Multimedia installation.
- **TECHNIQUES/PROCESSES:** Mikalsen reinvents a traditional Sámi belt weaving technique to investigate the multi-layered role of fire in her community and its history. Her braiding technique weaves together tales of lore lost under the ashes, of past lives remembered and of new rituals arising from the old.
- **IDEAS/INSPIRATIONS/CONTEXT:** For the artist, fire is a source of comfort in cold weather, a reminder of the violent colonisation and erasure of Sámi cultural heritage, and a means of warning communities across the Norwegian coast about imminent threats. Fire is an element strongly connected to everyday life, which informs the artist's understanding of the world and the cosmos. Featuring stories from Mikalsen's family, the work weaves together fire and darkness to speak of transmutation, connecting the past with the present and the cosmic with the personal.

DID YOU KNOW?

1. The Sámi descended from nomads who lived in northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, which surround their home region of Sápmi.
2. Until quite recently, the Sámi economy was based on reindeer herding. Now, they rely on fishing, farming, trade and tourism. In the past, Sámi reindeer herders had nomadic lifestyles. Moving with their herds of reindeer in groups of five or six families, they lived in tents or turf huts and supplemented their diets by hunting and fishing.
3. In the 1900s, the Sámi communities became more invested in conserving their traditions and culture. They reintroduced the use of the Sámi language in schools and took measures to protect their reindeer pastures.

Artist Folio – MEETING NATASHA

SECONDARY:

SOCIAL STUDIES

HISTORY

GEOGRAPHY

ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

PRE-VISIT

“When objects are burnt and disappear, they can start anew or become something else.”

Elina Waage Mikalsen

In Singapore, what are some cultural practices that use fire?

- Discuss with your partner and/or list all the information you can remember on a piece of paper.

DURING YOUR VISIT

Walk around and experience the installation.

- Which part of the installation reminds you of fire? Why do you think so?
- Do you notice anything unusual about the publication and what is printed on it? Why do you think the artist decided to print the book in an unconventional manner?

POST-VISIT

Which aspect of Mikalsen’s installation left a deep impression on you? Share it with your partner.

- What are the similarities and differences between how the both of you experienced the artwork?

Do you think the artist conveyed her stories well through this presentation? Why?

FIND OUT MORE

- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Sami." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11 October 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sami> (accessed 22 November 2022)
- Long, Louise. "A Tantalising Tale of Art and Gothic Horror in Norway’s Arctic Archipelago." *Wallpaper*, 28 September 2022. <https://www.wallpaper.com/art/lofoten-international-art-festival-review> (accessed 22 November 2022).