

COLBENGTON

MAERZ contemporary



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"Whale backbone" Overlayed glass Colbengtson 2015

Photo: Nils Agdler

NO COUNTRY – NO VOICE

Although the Sami culture is still well represented through some 80 000 people in the northern parts of Europe, it is a matter of fact that the extension of the different Sami languages are under severe pressure for their survival. According to the Unesco Red Book for endangered languages, 10 out of the 11 mentioned variations of Sami languages are classified as seriously endangered or close to extinction.

Under such circumstances, is it good to know that several Sami artists are still advocating the culture. One of these are Tomas Colbengtson of Sweden. In his works Colbengtson expresses the questions, not the answers, for the Sami Culture going forward. He often uses traditional Sami influences to emphasize the importance of maintaining the culture and its original elements.

A history that does not include a common geography or a common country, just stretching from the northern parts of Norway in the west, through Sweden and Finland, and ending on the Kola peninsula in the east, where some 2 000 Samis are still living.

The main starting element in Colbengtson's art is very often an old photograph showing daily Sami life and the nature of the Sami areas. These are transferred onto the artwork's basic material – often to be seen as glass sculptures. Tomas Colbengtson is communicating the importance of telling the story of a small minority that was not very often heard.

The artist will be exhibiting on two different occasions in Berlin this year, starting with a group exhibition at the Nordic Embassies in July, and later in the year with a solo exhibition at Maerz Contemporary.

Petter Haakon Pettersson / Maerz Contemporary

