

Johtingaidnu – The Path Within. An artistic research project by Emilia Tikka with Oula A. Valkeapää and Leena Valkeapää

In the exhibition *Johtingaidnu – The Path Within*, Finnish artist Emilia Tikka, Sámi reindeer herder Oula A. Valkeapää, and artist Leena Valkeapää explore the traditions of nomadic Sámi reindeer herding through films, drawings, and an installation. They show that this nomadic practice is threatened today and speculate about the future in the year 2102. How can memories of past lifestyles of humans and animals be revived in the distant future? What role do bioscientific methods play in this process, and how can they be reconciled with the traditional knowledge of the Sámi herders?

Opening: April 10, 2025, 6–9 p.m.

Duration: April 11 – July 13, 2025

Opening Hours: Thursday and Friday, 1-7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Free Entry

As part of her artistic PhD, Tikka has been collaborating since 2021 with Sámi reindeer herder Oula A. Valkeapää and artist Leena Valkeapää. In their joint work, they retrace the traditional migration routes of the Valkeapää family, who have followed their reindeer along paths, that once stretched for hundreds of kilometres for centuries.

A film by Oula A. Valkeapää offers insight into the life of a reindeer herder, capturing his daily routine with a live-action camera. His footage is accompanied by herding scenes from 2001, documented by Leena Valkeapää, which show resting places in locations that are no longer accessible today.

The trio addresses the many upheavals the land of the Sámi has experienced in the past through an installation presented within a tent-like structure. A projected map illustrates how routes have shifted between 1500 and today—yet continue to exist in the memories of both humans and animals. This aspect becomes crucial to understand when the future arrives in the form of a powerful current that disrupts everything. Tikka, Valkeapää, and Valkeapää visualize the collapse of the Gulf Stream, a conceivable catastrophe that, according to climate scientists, could plunge large parts of Northern Europe into icy cold with severe storms, rendering the region uninhabitable. While this would be an unprecedented crisis for many, for the Sámi reindeer herders, it could mean a return to ancestral paths.

The accompanying film by Tikka, based on a script by Oula A. Valkeapää, is set in the year 2102. It explores the question of whether memories of a past way of life could be retrieved using bioscientific methods. This idea is grounded in epigenetics, a field of research that examines how environmental factors leave traces in bodies—traces that can be passed down through generations. Finnish science and technology researcher Marianne Mäkelin, who contributed a text to the exhibition, describes the discipline as follows:

„Epigenetics, roughly, refers to an approach in biology that takes the phenotype, the observable form of the organism, rather than the gene, as its starting point in studying developmental change. Studies in this area have shown how processes that happen outside the genome can result in changes in the organism’s observable characteristics, and how these changes might be heritable. (...) Epigenetic understanding of bodies sees them as more porous and directly influenced by the world around them.“

Tikka's film culminates in a moment of "revelation," initiating a return to long-standing traditions and demonstrating that bioscientific methods in combination with indigenous knowledge systems could succeed in retrieving memories from the distant past. *Johtingaidnu – The Path Within* evokes a comforting vision of the far future. While it does not downplay the consequences of climate change, it fosters hope that in such a future, productive and sustainable forms of coexistence between humans and non-humans may be possible.

Related Events

April 11, 2025, 12:30 p.m.: *Epigenetic Memories. On Migrating Birds, Reindeer Migrations, and the Bioscience of Epigenetics*, The artist **Emilia Tikka** and **Prof. Dr. Miriam Liedvogel**, Director of the Institute for Bird Research "Vogelwarte Helgoland" and Professor of Ornithology at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, discuss the current state and the development of the still young discipline of epigenetics and how ecological, political or technological factors influence the migratory behaviour of birds and other migrating animals, moderated by Dr. Christina Landbrecht.

May 4, 2025, 12 p.m.: Guided Tour through the exhibition with the artist and the curator on the occasion of Gallery Weekend Berlin.

June 28, 2025, 5 p.m. until midnight: Guided Tours through the exhibition on the occasion of Lange Nacht der Wissenschaften.

For more information, please visit our website at www.scheringstiftung.de

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