



Western
Front

303 East 8th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia
V5T 1S1 Canada

Tuesday to Saturday
Noon to 5:00 pm PST

November 14th - December 20th 2014

The same condition
repeated at every
moment of the walk

Joar Nango

The same condition repeated at every moment of the walk

Note 22: He's got: A wooden pallet and a pair of old slalom skis. He wants: A snowmobile sled.

The above verse, written by Sigbjørn Skåden, first appeared as part of Joar Nango and Silje Figenschou Thoresen's 2010 *Indigenuity Project*. Nango and Thoresen travelled throughout Northern Finland, Sweden and Norway — traditional territory of the Sámi, the indigenous peoples of Scandinavia and the culture to which both artists belong — in order to observe vernacular design traditions of the North. Note 22's sled is one example of hundreds of similar, necessary, provisional and improvised objects that were documented.

Nango, trained as an architect, sees these makeshift objects as a potent critique of design culture. A critique not only of the high-minded and ubiquitous design of his Scandinavian home, but of a culture that manufactures new products for any conceivable scenario. The hybridized objects Nango focuses on are reused and repurposed, constructed out of existing and available material, and specific to the person who creates them — the designer and the user are one in the same.

Bricolage, as described by the anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss,

similarly describes making do with “whatever is at hand.” In Nango's world these objects function less as a primitive archeological tool and more as a site of active cultural resistance. These objects are autonomous, dynamic and poetic. They contain what Dr. Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, a noted scholar of American Chicano art and culture, refers to as *rasquachismo*: “Automobile tires used as plant containers” are objects of appropriation, resistance and reversal, that exemplify “an attitude rooted in resourcefulness and adaptability yet mindful of stance and style.”

It is this stance and style, the intuitive essence of these objects, that Nango explores through the work in *The same condition repeated at every moment of the walk. Territorial Trapezoids* (2014), a structure created with wood from the Western Front's basement woodpile, supports a transparent photograph of a highly practical creation: the means to save a parking spot in urban Beijing. In this context, the rebar and chain sculpture is reframed as something to be contemplated beyond its design use. Similarly, *My Father's Life Vest* (2014) not only documents a common object, but also reveals an endearing portrait of a father, who trusts his life to two plastic jugs held together with plastic webbing.

Five Pieces of Mongolian Wall (2014) propped up against the gallery wall are cut from a large piece of 60-year-old felt that was once the side of a Mongolian yurt. Acquired by the artist on a recent trip to

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, these fragments of worn, unevenly coloured material were once a part of someone's home. Cut into five rectangles, Nango has created his own objects that hover between the utility of a floor mat and the aesthetic language of minimalist sculpture. He is highly conscious of his own fetishization of these materials. By reframing a nomadic living structure in this way he poses questions to us, but also to himself, as an artist, as an indigenous person, and as a global traveller and cultural observer.

The excerpt of Skåden's poem projected into a corner of the gallery, entitled *Notes from a Backwoods Saami Core* (2014), reflects the spiritual, intuitive reality that Nango's work explores. Pragmatism and symbolism collide where humorous anecdotes about snowmobile sleds and Sámi dishwashing techniques rub against ghost stories about the born and abandoned *eahpádusak*, "human apocrypha trapped between existing and never having existed." The works embody this spirit of mythology and everyday invention — connecting it to the land, to things, and to Joar Nango.

- Caitlin Jones

Artist Biography

Joar Nango (b. 1979, Alta, Norway) lives and works in Romssa, Norway. Inhabiting the frontier between architecture, design and art, Nango's practice explores issues of native identity through contradictions in contemporary architecture and the built environment. In particular, he is interested in the creative simplicity and sustainable knowledge that exists within informal building environments of the north. In 2010 Nango co-founded the architectural collective FFB specializing in temporary structures and interventions in urban contexts. FFB was nominated for Norsk Form's prize for young architects in 2012. Joar Nango has exhibited internationally, including recently as part of 43SNA, Medellin, Colombia (2013), the Norwegian Sculpture Biennale at Vigelandsmuseet, Oslo, Norway (2013), and Archizines at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, NYC, USA (2012). Recent solo exhibitions by Nango have been presented at Gallery SAW, Ottawa, Canada (2013), Knipsu, Bergen, Norway (2012), and SDG in Karasjok, Norway (2011).

Acknowledgements

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List of Works

1. Notes from a Backwoods Saami Core

Excerpts from a poem by Sigbjørn Skåden,
projection, 2014

2. The Sound of a Russian Doorbell

Acrylic print, salvaged wood, clamps,
fluorescent light, 2014

3. Old Tires in the Shade

Acrylic print, salvaged wood, clamps,
2014

4. My Father's Life Vest

Acrylic print, salvaged wood, clamps,
2014

5. Fake Leather Protecting Keyhole from Sand

Acrylic print, salvaged wood, clamps,
2014

6. Five Pieces of Mongolian Wall

Found felt from a Mongolian *Ger*, dye,
salvaged wood, 2014

7. Territorial Trapezoids

Acrylic print, salvaged wood, clamps,
2014

