Gallejaur

CATALOG OF EXHIBITION
…the experience is remarkable.
Has time stopped? The car and the gaze turn. A feeling emerges of visiting a frozen existence, the multi-building farmland of centuries past...

Eva Gradin
The exhibition *Gallejaur – photographic documentation* is based on an ethnological study of the village of Gallejaur that Norrbottens museum has carried out on behalf of the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten.

The investigation comprised a section of interviews conducted by Eva Gradin and photographic documentation by Daryoush Tahmasebi.

The village was visited fifteen times during the period November 2000-July 2002.

The goal has been to study the background of today’s village structure, and thereby the
processes behind the present appearance of the village. The commission includes documentation that will form the basis for a study on the creation of a culture reserve in accordance with the Environmental Code, Ch. 7 Section 9.

The main information sources for the investigation were naturally the village inhabitants. Ebba Karlsson, Erik and Arvid Eriksson, and now deceased Lennart Lövgren have all supplied invaluable knowledge of life, living conditions and livelihood in the village.

Information about the village has also been acquired through studies at, among other organisations, the Environmental Court in Umeå, the District Court in Piteå, the National Survey in Luleå and the Planning Office in Arvidsjaur.

In the museum’s investigation, people and their buildings have been chosen in a way that throws light on the village’s development and change. The focus on the buildings is due to the possibility to date them given by the engraved of completion, and sometimes builder’s signature, to be found on the gables.

The documentation is presented in a written report, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten Dnr. 223-7499-00. The report is on sale in the museum shop.
The village of Gallejaur

Gallejaur lies on the boundary between the counties of Norrbotten and Västerbotten. A third of the village belonged to Norsjö Parish until 28 February 1958, when it was among the areas whose administration was transferred to Arvidsjaur Municipality. The buildings are located on a slope on the north shore of Lake Gallejaur.

The village today consists of nine homesteads built between 1801 and 1958. In addition to the farmhouses, there are a large number of outhouses. Seven of the homesteads lie in the village centre and two properties are to the west of it.

During the hydropower construction era, buildings belonging to Vattenfall Energy Company were added to the village and now stand on their original sites, along with other buildings that have been re-used in other locations and then moved here. Many of today’s buildings in Gallejaur previously stood on land that is now submerged. There are also eleven recreational cabins with outhouses.
Gallejaur from new settlement to village

One homestead
Gallejaur was marked out as a Crown Settlement in 1801. Tradition has it that the settlement was founded by Carl Svensson. A couple of years later the settlement was taken over by his brother, Pehr Svensson. This homestead is today known as Löfgren’s.

Two homesteads
The new settlement was split into two units. On the new property, the son, Sven Persson, built the homestead known as the Anders-Larsa Homestead. The original homestead was taken over by the son-in-law, Johan Jonsson Löf. Sven and his wife were childless, and two sons of the original settler’s daughter came to live in as farmhands, Anders and Nils Vikberg.

Three homesteads
The Vikberg brothers later took over the homestead. Anders stayed in the Anders-Larsa Homestead, while his brother Nils and his wife built the Nils-Larsa Homestead. The home is practically a copy of the Anders-Larsa Homestead. The only difference is that the later building has a slightly higher upper storey with full-sized windows.
Several homesteads

The next estate division in the village took place in the 1920s, but was followed by more estate divisions over the following decades. Anders Vikberg’s son, Johan Anton, took over the Anders-Larsa Homestead, and the married daughters Margareta Karlsson and Sofia Forslund built new farm properties, which are now known as Karlsson’s and Forslund’s.

The Nils-Larsa Homestead was taken over by Nils Vikberg’s son Hjalmar, while the other sons moved away. The son Hjalmar was given the cottage bakery, which was moved and had an upper floor added. The son Johan built a new home west of the village centre – “Uppi Johan’s”. Jonas Lögren, the son of Johan Jonsson Löf, took over Lögren’s. Those who then moved into Lögren’s were Jonas’ daughter Eva Eriksson with her family and her son Johan Wilhelm Löfgren with his family.

Wilhelm’s son, Lennart Lövgren, took over his father’s land in Norsjö Parish in the late 1930s, and built his own home, known as Lennart Lövgren’s.

In the estate division upon the death of Jonas Löfgren, a new property was created, when the Eriksson family came to break new ground to build their own home a couple of kilometres west of the village. The first big farmhouse in the village, built in 1844 by Pehr Svensson, was part of the inheritance, but as recently as 1984 it was moved to the Timber Floating Association’s timber depot at the mouth of the feeder canal on Lake Gallejaur.
Photographer’s thoughts

Photography, as we all know, is not real at all. It is an illusion of reality with which we create our own private world.

Arnold Newman

The Gallejaur experience

I read this quotation long after the documentation project was completed. However, Arnold Newman’s view of photography is spot on in the case of Gallejaur.

Who am I who observe? What is Gallejaur?

Footsteps and footprints, and their relationship, were among the questions to be searched for, rather than answered, during the documentation project. The interplay between then and now and where the dividing line runs, was a constant consideration. It was not easy to depict reality. To make an objective narrative was impossible. The more I delved into Gallejaur, the better I understood that this was going to be complicated detective work: to analyse imprints and then try to understand the person or people who had left the imprints.

My first impression of Gallejaur was that of a village about to die out. After the second visit, it became evident that it was full of life. I had been wrong.

The Eriksson brothers’ computer was switched on. They had some glitches with their Internet connection, as people do.

The latest model cell phone was on charge in the bedroom. The video camera that
Erik had just bought a game that was refusing to play back on the TV screen. The post arrived, bringing Ebba’s newspapers and magazines, which she subscribed to; everything from ‘Craft Magazine’ to ‘Rural Life’.

In this confusing reality I chose – in addition to the commission I had – to try to document the imperceptible: that which is only vaguely sensed or which is implicitly understood to have happened. On camera, each “deserted” interior came to be perceived as a recording with a wealth of unedited experiences, which when played back awoke new realisations and contexts.

**Imagery**

Cold, blue, empty and/or warm, red, full? Single frames, diptych, triptych, or collage?

In selecting pictures for the exhibition, single pictures have been seen as “words”, which in diptychs and triptychs I have combined into visual phrases.

In most documentation projects of a similar character in Norrbotten, the choice has been a melancholic, sterile, bare, subdued cold, empty, blue and in some case, practically schizoid imagery.

Life in Gallejaur as I experienced it is far from all these things. Therefore, in selecting images for this exhibition, I have chosen an imagery that is glad, colourful, full, warm and red.

Daryoush Tahmasebi
1. Lennart’s parents, Ville and Hulda Löfgren, lived with their ten children in grandfather’s add-on cottage bakery – today the main building at the site of the village’s first homestead. Lennart Lövgren at home on the sofa talks about his upbringing in the oldest homestead in the village.
2. Lennart Lövgren, 1914-2002, with the photograph of his second wife, Agnes. He built his home, which he owned, at the end of the 1930s. Today it is the home of his son, Christer Lövgren.
3. Lennart Lövgren at the residential home Borgargården in Arvidsjaur. Time passes, life conditions change and many questions remained unanswered. Soon after the first interview, he was admitted to hospital, and after that to the residential home. He died in spring 2002, and was buried at the same time as his brother, the artist Birger Lövgren, 1916-2002.
4. Lennart Lövgren with a photograph of his father’s parents, Maria and Jonas Löfgren – the third generation of smallholders living in the village’s original homestead. Lennart’s son Christer is clearing shrubbery. A few years ago, he returned to live in his home village.
Six of the nine homesteads in Gallejaur have owned reindeer. It was only the homeowners on the Norrbotten side of the boundary who owned a reindeer brand, since concessionary reindeer herding is unique to Norrbotten County. The reindeer were tended by Saami belonging to Mausjaur Sijta reindeer-herding district. Today there are no reindeer owners in Gallejaur. Reindeer herding was a stabilising factor in the villagers’ livelihood, since reindeer are not as sensitive as other livestock to natural variations.
6. Ebba Karlsson at Gallejaur Power Station. The power station was constructed in the early 1960s. Lake Gallejaur then became a power reservoir. The water level was raised by about 12 metres, and submerged most of the original farmland. The energy needs of the community wiped out the village’s agriculture.
7. The timber companies have not taken much from the forests owned by Gallejaur villagers, says Erik Eriksson. People have felled just enough for their own needs – for fuel, for building homes and fences, and for woodcraft. Today this forest is highly valued as virgin forest.
8. An abandoned nesting box for a goldeneye is a relic from the days of the domestic economy, when the eggs of nesting sea birds were collected. Ebba remembers when the nesting boxes were placed out, but says that she has never eaten goldeneye eggs. Birds, hares, squirrels and foxes were hunted around the village in the past. Birds for food; squirrels and foxes for the skins. Game hunting was an important source of income for Lennart Lövgren and his brother Sven. Grouse, especially capercaillie and black grouse, were snared and sold to buyers. Squirrel skins paid better than selling forest, says Erik Eriksson.
9. Ebba, on her way to Lennart Lövgren’s homestead. Many of the buildings in Gallejaur have a different function today than in the past. Seen here, a building that was originally a barn for a now demolished cowshed, and later became a stable. Engraved on the gable: JLG 4/5 1893. Such inscriptions allow definite dating of many of the village’s buildings.
10. From Forslund’s, Gallejaur.
“Sit in peace and rest your feet till someone else doth want your seat”.

Sitt med ro och ha det bra tills en annan vill platsen ha.
11. Ebba Karlsson scanning the horizon for the post. Nowadays, the rural postman calls at the village twice weekly. On other weekdays, the post may be fetched in Järvträsk. There is no refuse collection for the four year-round inhabitants of the village.
The traditional annual “summer meetings” in the Anders-Larsa Homestead have been re-introduced, with visitors from both Norrbotten and Västerbotten. Ebba Karlsson arrives at the summer meeting, 2001.
13. Ebba Karlsson has lived all her life in Gallejaur. She was born in 1922. The haymaking fence-poles are disused. They are no longer used because much of the village’s cultivated land is now under water. The natural resources that for generations were pre-requisite for the smallholdings in the village had to make way for the energy needs of industrialised society.
14. Ebba Karlsson and “Gubben” (old man) in the kitchen in Forslund’s. Ebba does her baking in the Anders-Larsa Homestead, where there is a new kitchen in the chamber next to the original, thereby preserved, big room.
15. The Forslund Homestead, where Ebba Karlsson now lives, and which belonged to her aunt Sofia. Ebba moved here when her sister Lisa, who took care of Sofia and Hjalmar, began to feel poorly. The life’s work of Mr and Mrs Forslund was laid waste by the hydropower scheme. Their home was moved from the damming zone to its present site. The cellar was added when the house was moved.
16. Arvid Eriksson among some rare plants which were signposted during an inventory of the flora. The area is a “Class I Site” in the County Administrative Board’s conservation programme for natural and cultural values in the farm landscape and is a “Class II Site” in the inventory of natural pastureland.
17. Arvid Eriksson, born in 1924, has lived all his life in Gallejaur. He grew up in the village's oldest farmhouse, with his grandfather Jonas Löfgren. In connection with the division of the estate in the 1950s, the Erikssons moved to a new house a couple of kilometres to the west of the village centre.
18. “Kalas Puffar” - puffed wheat - is part of the Eriksson brothers’ breakfast. Arvid has lined up the collectible free gifts on the window sill.
19. Erik Eriksson, just returned from the morning’s moose hunting. He belongs to a hunting team on the Crown land in Norsjö District, Västerbotten County. The annual moose hunt there ends on the last day of December. Before the 1940s, no moose were seen around Gallejaur. Life in this isolated forest village was completely self-sufficient – living off the fruits of nature. The domestic economy has characterised Gallejaur well into the modern age.
20. Erik Eriksson is today the oldest inhabitant in Gallejaur, born in 1921. He is Arvid’s older brother. They each own a SAAB 900, 1990 vintage. In 1956, the brothers bought the first tractor in the village, a Bolinder Munktell Victor. They then became contractors to the whole village for all types of vehicle jobs.
21. The Eriksson brothers look out over the dammed-up Gallejaur Marsh, where the village had its farmland before the hydropower project. The directly perceptible is experienced with all the senses.

In Gallejaur, it becomes clear both that humankind affects the physical environment and that the physical environment affects humankind and life conditions.

The inheritance after the grandfather gave the Eriksson family the oldest farmhouse in the village, but only on condition that they move in. The building has been reassembled at the mouth of the feeder canal, and is used as a recreational home by the Eriksson brothers’ nieces and nephews.
What does Gallejaur tell us?

Gallejaur and its buildings tell a story with clear indications of older economic and social organisational patterns.

Through the development of the homesteads from the beginning of the 19th century to the end of the 1950s, the village is interesting in both an architectural historical and socio-historical respect, and it has considerable value for the continuity of the architectural development.

Much of the architecture is preserved in relatively untouched state on the original estate, which also gives the village considerable environmental value.

The village has its special character of an old farming culture. Changes forced by the hydropower project clearly illustrate the effects of the industrial society.

Gallejaur also has historical value on the personal level due to the fact that the village has lived and still lives through the descendants of the first settler.
Gallejaur today

Gallejaur has featured in numerous newspaper articles and tourist brochures as a well-preserved village, which with its multi-building system of unpainted timber buildings bears witness to the living conditions of 19th century settlers in the forestlands.

Before the hydropower project, the village was documented by Västerbotten Museum and the National Heritage Board. The yearbook Norrbotten 1959 had Gallejaur as its theme.

To visit Gallejaur in November mist, in the grip of winter and in summer greenery are entirely different experiences. The village in grey, blue or green represents three fundamentally different encounters and gives completely different signals about the lives and customs of the inhabitants. In this place, with its almost compact mass of grey and tarred-brown buildings, there are just three inhabited homesteads in winter. The other homesteads are deserted.

In the summer, the village comes to life. Children and grandchildren with their roots in Gallejaur then move into the recreational homes with their families.

The picture of Gallejaur is not at all the same as reality. For example, three unmarried sisters are said to have lived here
as if in another age as regards work, house and home. However, life has not been static, but most dynamic. Electricity arrived, the road arrived, but the water covered the fields and meadows.

The imprints of the power company Vattenfall, and of Gallejaur Power Station, changed everything. The natural resources that for generations had been the pre-condition for farming life were devastated by the energy needs of the industrialised society. Large portions of the village’s infields lie under water.

Although the lake encroached by a further 100 metres, the landscape was not changed appreciably, since the slope was so steep at the present shoreline.

Gallejaur, which in every context is described as a unique north Swedish forest village, has been comprehensively exposed to the influence of the industrial society. This however, without most of the village losing its stock of buildings and other items representing a lifestyle belonging to the end of the 19th century.

The village is an outstanding illustration of how a new settlement was established and developed in harmony with, and in a struggle for, natural resources.
Gallejaur Power Station

With Vattenfall it all changed. Natural conditions were destroyed and conditions for forestland self-sufficiency were drowned.

The farmer’s life vanished with Gallejaur Power Station, which artist Birger Lövgren expressed in these words:
Regional plan, surveyor’s instrument, rationalizers have long pointed to the lonely little spot on the map. Metaphorically, they have wanted with a dagger and other sharp-edged weapons to scrape away the spot. The place – the northern village, with a few dozen souls, has been afflicted by a generally widespread ailment, bled dry of its crofter bondsmen and those who conquer the osier of the wide marshes through dogged pioneering toil, through stubborn belief that the soil and only the soil can bring growth and sustenance for both man and beast and other creatures living on it: and security, the farmer’s dividend. But the knife of profit ended these dreams. The young left in droves, to the town, to high income, to stress and glaring neon lights. They changed to machine monotony from the sweating slog with the spade.

From “Dying village” by Birger Lövgren
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