

Opening of the exhibition

It is a joy for the Norsk Folkemuseum to host the photo exhibition "Bunader i nærbilde", Folk Costume Close-Up, by Laila Durán. This theme suits this museum well, where photos, costumes and textiles have had a central position since more than one hundred years, even if it was not until the 1950ies that the Sami heritage was exhibited as a part of Norwegian culture. For the moment we are receiving Norwegian objects back from Nordiska Museet in Sweden, while at the same time we are planning to bring Sami artefacts back to their original contexts.

- Even if there are many people who use bunad in Norway, it is not often that bunads are seen in a photo exhibition. Maybe the reason for this is that everybody in this country knows about them. At the national day the 17th of May, and on family celebrations the bunad is worn as festive wear. The pictures we commonly see of bunads are often celebrities in official ceremonies, photos we take of each other at the celebrations of the year or in life, or old depictions in the museum collections. However, in these pictures it is not the costumes that are in focus. Through her photos Laila Durán makes us really *see* the bunads, and this is what the title of the exhibition, "Folk Costume Close-Up" refers to. The photographer shows us the bunads in a way we are not used to.

- First of all it is not always the most renowned costumes that are shown in this exhibition. Some of them you will recognize, but the majority are bunads that are based on the old folk costumes, clothes that were worn by the rural population before the breakthrough of industrialisation. Some are copies of old folk costumes, which have been created through a meticulous reconstruction process, where different sources as coloured drawings, old photos and written description have been combined with the study of preserved garments.

- In cooperation with museums and private collections the photographer also shows us old folk costumes that are not used today. In the old farming communities there were a lot of variations of the same costume. There were wedding costumes, church costumes, festive costumes and everyday costumes and there were differences in clothing between children, adults, unmarried and married. These nuances are in great deal forgotten today, when we only use the bunads as festive wear. By using models in all ages and stage different occasions in the pictures Laila Durán demonstrates the pluralism in the local costume tradition.

- As a museum we highly value this communication of knowledge about the historic costumes. Hopefully this can stimulate an interest for old artefacts and inspire to the learning of the old textile techniques and thereby carrying forth the tradition of this part of our immaterial cultural

heritage.

- The photos are also different from what we usually see, because they show people in traditional surroundings and situations. The costumes are the main part of the picture, but there are also a lot of other components and details, which make the garments stand out. In many cases the models are friends or of the same family, something that gives a genuine expression. But there is also a focus on the textiles, which makes it almost possible to feel the different fabrics when looking at the photos.

- Something else that makes this exhibition special is the Scandinavian perspective. We often think of our Norwegian costumes as something particularly national. But among the three peoples of the two countries the use of what we call bunad is very different. In Norway more than 50 per cent of all women and a growing part of all men have a bunad, while in Sweden "bygdedräkterna" are used mostly by people with special interests.

- In the Sami regions the majority of the inhabitants own a kirtle, but the use has varied over time. In some places there is an unbroken tradition, while in other places the use diminished or disappeared as a consequence of the Norwegianisation politics. Today the interest is growing, many are making kirtles and many more are using them. In areas where the tradition was broken old kirtles are reconstructed, showing how important the costume is as a marker of identity.

- Otherwise, the folk costumes of Scandinavia went out of use in most places in the course of the 19th century. When they were revived in the end of the century as national symbols, the Norwegian bunads got an extra dimension: to signal the independence from Sweden, to which we had been united since 1814, and to Denmark, who ruled Norway since the middle ages. It was then important to create costumes that were national, free from "utenlandsk fjas og uekthet", foreign vanity and counterfeits, as it was called. Because of that, cotton fabrics and silk ribbons were replaced with linen and embroidery in wool, something that today characterises our most renowned bunads. These costumes are an important part of our tradition. And if some are particularly Norwegian, it might be that in many cases these are made more Norwegian than they originally were.

- But looking behind this, costume traditions emerge, where the local was more important than the national. We have been in contact with each other, interpreting impulses of continental style and mixing it with our local tradition. Costumes could therefore be more different in neighbouring Norwegian valleys than on each side of the border. And looking further back in time, we find common traces with the ancient costume tradition that are today passed on by the Sami.

- And the most exciting is, that we are able to see new connections in the old costume material. Through her photos Laila Durán makes these things actual to us today, as modern human beings.