

# Juhani PALLASMAA

## SIIDA, SAMI LAPP MUSEUM AND THE NORTHERN LAPLAND VISITOR CENTER

Inari, 1990-98

The museum presents the natural environment of Finnish Lapland and the culture and life of the Sámis who are one of the indigenous people of the circumpolar zone. Their life style is closely tied to the natural surroundings and natural cycles, and the museum exhibitions survey their demanding conditions of survival.

The two-storey building is designed to blend in with the low forest and undulating terrain. The architecture is vaguely reminiscent of the landscape, as well as the building types and vehicles found in this northern tradition while also working with contemporary architectural concepts.

The entry to the building is from the lower level, whereas the exhibitions are on the level of the existing outdoor museum behind the new structure. On the ground floor, the public part of the building contains an entrance lobby, adjacent lecture room and guiding services for travellers, the second floor contains a café, three exhibition halls and a library. The offices are located in one end of the building and the preparation, storage and technical facilities are below the exhibition halls.

A unique aspect of the project is the integration of the architectural concept with the organization of the exhibitions. The exhibitions combine presentations and interactions of nature and Sámi culture in accordance with an ecological model, organised as an annual cycle of the year.

The exhibition is arranged spatially: the outer layer presents survival strategies in nature, the intermediate layer the features of traditional Sámi culture, and the center area portrays today's technological culture. In the spatial arrangement of the exhibition both circumferential and radial readings of exhibits and information reveal meaningful relationships and interactions. The exhibition also contains a soundscape activated by the movements of the visitor.

The chronological history of upper Lapland nature and human cultures of the region is presented as a montage of texts, images and objects in a separate exhibition space.