

Icelandic Art Today Press release, May 2009

Icelandic Art Today is the first book of its kind to present in English a wide array of Icelandic contemporary artists born after 1950. Thirteen well known writers of various nationality join hands in writing about 50 artists who have been prominent during the past decade or longer. Many of these artists have gained recognition outside Iceland, either in Europe or in the United States and some have chosen to stay abroad and try their luck in various centres of art although most of them maintain a contact with their country of origin.

Icelandic Art Today is 340 pages, lavishly illustrated with informative texts on each of the fifty artists and an extensive introduction to contemporary art in Iceland, which can be traced back to the late fifties and early sixties when a growing discontent with modernism and formalism was being felt by a generation of artists born in the twenties and the early thirties. With the advent of numerous artists born in the early forties Contemporary art became the dominant trait of Icelandic art in the late sixties and early seventies, paving the way for Conceptual and Minimal Art in the seventies and the eighties, before evolving along postmodernistic lines in the late eighties.

Despite its kinship with international trends and movements Icelandic art has a logic of its own, which is not easy to decipher although it is quite easy to detect. Compared with art from other Nordic countries Icelandic contemporary art is perhaps less sociological or psychological than either its Danish or Swedish counterparts and has less to do with the search and loss of identity, which often characterizes Norwegian and Finnish art.

If one is to sum up recent contemporary art in Iceland, which is not a rewarding task, it is rather based on a playful attitude towards tradition and the absurdity of being situated halfway between western culture and a striking nature, which is perfectly otherwise than anything found in the rest of Europe. Isolation, conditioned by a difficult notion of time and space, may be a common denominator of Icelandic contemporary art although *Icelandic Art Today* shows it to be anything but obvious.

While we thank Hatje Cantz for their patience and encouragement, and all those who helped realize this wonderful project we hope that this book may reveal the variety of Icelandic art, which still benefits from the spectrum of different countries and cities where these 50 artists drew their postgraduate formation before blending it with the background of their origin.



Editors: Christian Schoen
and Halldór Björn Runólfsson
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Hatje Cantz (Germany)
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ICELANDIC ART TODAY is published by the
Center for Icelandic Art and the National
Gallery of Iceland

The publication introduces 50 artists from
Iceland including: *Finnbogi Pétursson, Gabriela
Friðriksdóttir, Helgi Þorgils Friðjónsson,
The Icelandic Love Corporation, Katrín
Sigurðardóttir, Margrét H. Blöndal, Líbía Castro
+ Ólafur Ólafsson, Ragnar Kjartansson, Rúrí,
Steingrímur Eyfjörð.*

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Þór Andrésson, Margrét Elísabet Ólafsdóttir,
Matthias Wagner K, Ragna Sigurðardóttir, Shauna
Laurel Jones, Þóra Þórisdóttir.*

The book will be launched on
Friday, June 5, 10.00
in connection with the press conference of the
Icelandic Pavilion at the 53rd International Art
Exhibition in Venice
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Palazzo Michiel dal Brusà
Cannaregio 4391/A (Entrance on Strada Nova)
Ca' d'Oro stop on vaporetto

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