

GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR

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GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR



Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir, yet..., 2017, Pealed photos, gouache, typewriting on divers papers, 57,3 x 76 cm

Born 1969 Reykjavik (IS)
Lives and works in Brussels (BE)

Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir was born in 1969 in Reykjavik, Iceland. She studied at the Icelandic College of Art and Crafts in Reykjavik, in the early '90s and then at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels de La Cambre in Brussels, from 1994 to 1997. She finished her education at the HISK – Hoger Institute of Fine Arts in Flanders, from 2001 to 2004. Today, she lives and works in Brussels, while still being active in the Icelandic art scene.

Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir's artworks have been exhibited in numerous solo and group shows in Iceland and in Europe. In 2008, she had a solo show at the National Gallery of Iceland. In 2013, she received the Gudmunda S. Kristinsdóttir Art Fund grant. Founded by the artist Erró in 1997, the fund's goal is to acknowledge and encourage female artists by annually awarding one female artist with a grant. The selection committee is composed of the directors of the Reykjavik Art Museum, the Akureyri Art Museum and the National Gallery of Iceland. She was also included in the collection of the FRAC Picardie of Amiens in France.

SHOWS (SELECTED)

- 2018 *Fact of the Matter - Draft of Contemporary Art History in Iceland [1.0]*, Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík (IS)
- 2017 *Private Choices*, Centrale For Contemporary Art, Brussels (BE)
Something (un)conscious, Irène Laub Gallery, Brussels (BE)
DALONAZ I, Bruxelles (BE)
Microcosme, FRAC Picardie, Amiens (FR)
- 2016 *Inland Voyages in an inland voyage*, Mira Sanders, ARGOS, Bruxelles (BE)
Riki – flora, fana, fabula, Listasafn Reykjavíkur (IS)
- 2015 *Maison a vendre*, www.aka.events Bruxelles (BE)
De stille dimensie, cur. Filip Luyckx, VUL (Law faculty), Louvain (BE)
- 2014 *Your Compound View – Selection from the collection from 1970-2010*, Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík (IS)
- 2013 *Partager le sensible*, Magasin de Papier, Mons (BE)
Voyages intérieurs, Maison Particulière, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2012 *Surviving Pessimism*, We project, Bruxelles (BE)
Pop up – Musée d'Ixelles, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2011 *Féminin Pluriel (Feminine Plural)*, FRAC Picardie, Amiens (FR)
Then and Now, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík (IS)
- 2010 *Access et Paradox*, pour la Galerie Nationale d'Iceland, Paris (FR)
Watery Hues – A Survey of Icelandic Watercolours, Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík (IS)
En Quelques Traits, ISELP, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2009 *Volcano Lovers*, Ise Foundation, Soho, New York, (USA)
Take Off 2009, Koraalberg Gallery, Anvers (BE)
- 2008 *Nordic Drawings 2008*, Skelleftea Museum, Skelleftea and Rackstad Museum, Arvika (SE)
From Another Shore : Recent Icelandic Art, Scandinavian House – The Nordic Center in America, New York (USA)
- 2007 *Scared by Stupidity*, Koraalberg, Anvers (BE)
- 2006 *Adam Wasn't Long in Paradise*, Skaftfell Center for Visual Art, Seyðisfjörður (IS)
Raum2 – Galerie Conrads, Dusseldorf (DE)
Leere X Visions – Connexion, MARTa Herford, Herford (DE)

GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR

COLLECTIONS

Collection Hainaut Province (BE)
The French Community of Belgium (BE)
Listasjóður Pennans / Penninn Art Foundation, Iceland
Listasafn Reykjanesbæjar (IS)
National Gallery of Iceland (IS)
Reykjavík Art Museum (IS)
FRAC Picardie d'Amiens (FR)
Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris (FR)
Okolje Consulting art collection, Lubliana (SI)



Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir, *Ouverture bleue*, 2014, Photocopy, watercolor and sewing on paper, 24 x 33 cm

FAIRS

- 2018 Drawing Now, Paris (FR)
- 2015 Art on paper, Bozar, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2009 Art Brussels, Bruxelles (BE)
- 2005 Project Rooms ARCO 05, Madrid (SP)

GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR

If we were to presume that there is one fundamental base for all disciplines of the visual arts and design, we would have to look towards drawing. The architect draws his first stage of a building, just as any designed object has been constructed from the drawing board. Even a magazine or a poster has been organized by a graphic designer through laws of drawing. There is in fact little, if anything, constructed in the visual arts and design, that doesn't have its roots in drawing.

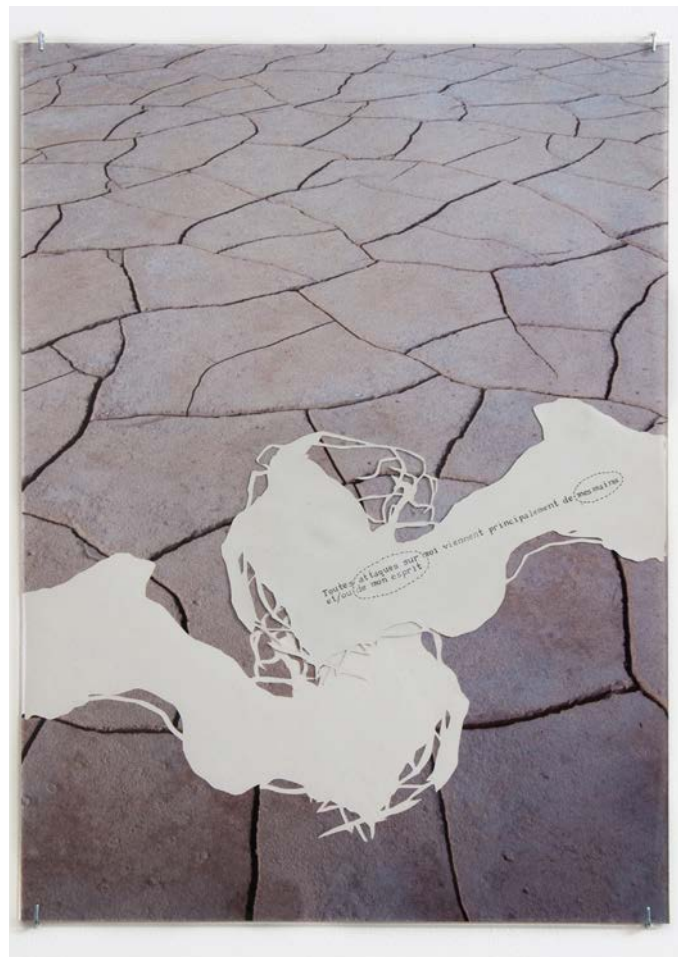
Since the beginning of modernism visual artists have struggled with understanding the essence of their medium, such as drawing and painting. In their explorations they are motivated by the existential need to understand the nature of things. And even though such a philosophical question may not be verbally in their mind as they craft their art, it is, nevertheless, a driving force for the artist in his quest for knowledge in his art.

Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir is an artist who explores the essence of drawing. It may not be clear to us, at first, whether to view her pictures as object reality or abstractions. Often they seem like drawings of nerves or tissues that criss-cross over each other or some microscopic cells that swim in bodily fluids. Perhaps one can see a glimpse of an organ or two, if one's imagination wanders in that direction, and some images may even lead us to a body of thoughts, since the artist works with patterns and text. Which ever it may be, we are made to believe that the artist is portraying an infrastructure of a body. The question is; what body is she drawing?

Let's suppose that a drawing is more than just a two-dimensional picture, just like the human body is more than just a three-dimensional form. The body has an incredibly complex biological system that is as incomprehensible to us as it is wonderful.

In that way I see Guðný Rósa's pictures. She is like a biologist that digs into the layers of the drawing. She cuts its flesh, wounds it, makes it bleed and sews it back together in order to get closer to its essence. Each picture or image becomes a part of an organic system and geometric structure of the drawing. We are then confronted with an infrastructure of a body. And it is the body drawing itself.

Jón B. K. Ransu
2013



Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir, *Trapped...*, 2017, Carved photo, pencil, sawing on cut paper, 39,5 x 30,5 cm

JBK Ransú
painter / author / curator (Momentum, Moss, Norway 2017)
Iceland

GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR

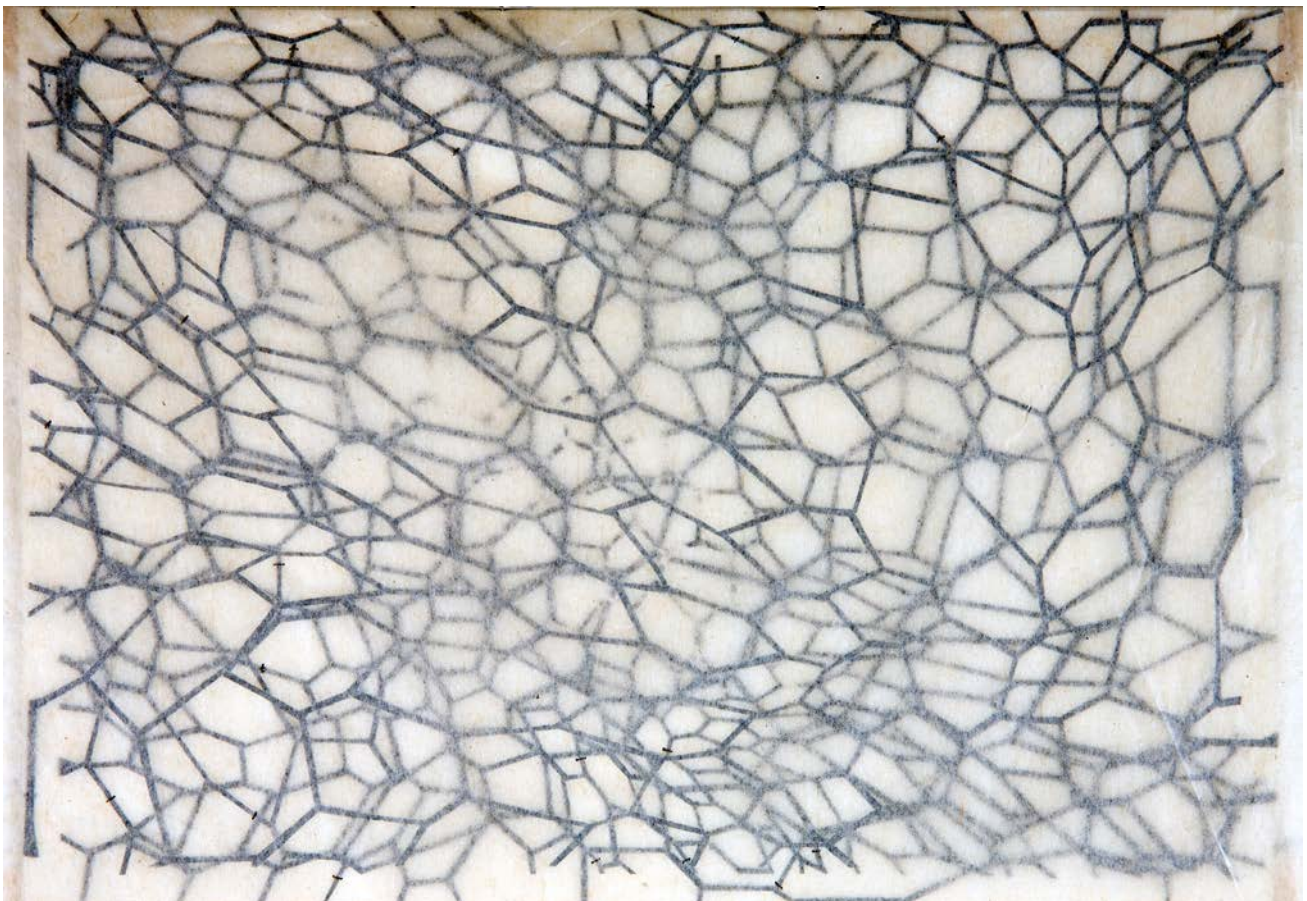
PROJECT

A place of respite.

Fascinated by water in all its states of aggregation, Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir works with various water dissolvable materials, such as fibre and paper itself, which are becoming increasingly predominant in her art. The artist produces drawings and paintings made up of several layers, which she cuts, peels or carves, before or after assembling them, aiming to get closer to the essence of creation. Each of these unique pieces has its own geometric structure and exists on the border between abstract and figurative. The work builds itself slowly, sometimes taking years; each line traced or erased has equal value, the remaining elements have the same strength as those removed.

The artworks and installations of Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir convey rhythm and silence. The methodical work process that takes place inside her studio extends into the exhibition areas, like a meditation, transforming them into breathing spaces.

Without knowing it, the public participates in creating a calm atmosphere. And by using that strategy, the artist establishes a serene, peaceful space right in the midst of a bustling art fair.



Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir, *untitled - corners reworked*, 2018, Ink, carving and sawing on divers papers, 22,3 x 32 cm

GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR

PRESS

Collect AAA (FR)

2018

By Elena Lombardo

FOIRES

Ode au dessin à Paris

En ce mois de mars, Paris met le dessin à l'honneur grâce au Salon du Dessin, à DRAWING NOW et à DDESSIN. Plusieurs galeries belges y participent et présentent les œuvres de maîtres belges et européens, tant anciens que contemporains.

TEXTE : ELENA LOMBARDO

Salon du Dessin

Palais Brongniart
www.salondudessin.com
 du 21 au 26-03

DRAWING NOW

Le Carreau du Temple
www.drawingnowparis.com
 du 22 au 25-03

DDESSIN

Atelier Richelieu
www.ddessinparis.fr/2018
 du 23 au 25-03

Le **Salon du Dessin** est désormais une valeur sûre. Il fut organisé pour la première fois il y a 23 ans par neuf marchands parisiens qui y participent encore. Cette année, 39 exposants sont de la partie. La Belgique est représentée pour la troisième fois par Eric Gillis Fine Art, spécialiste des œuvres du XIXe siècle et du Symbolisme belge. La galerie y présente, outre plusieurs œuvres du Belge François-Joseph Navez (1787-1869), d'autres œuvres plus petites d'artistes européens. Ses responsables précisent : « Nous exposerons des œuvres de plus petits formats, surtout parce que les visiteurs apprécient de faire de petites découvertes. » En marge du Salon du Dessin, on peut également visiter **DRAWING NOW**, évènement dédié au dessin contemporain. A l'heure actuelle, il s'agit du plus grand salon parisien en matière de dessin. La Belgique y est représentée par Valérie Bach, Geukens & De Vil et Irène Laub Gallery. Cette dernière participe pour la première fois à Drawing Now et introduit sur la scène française les œuvres de l'artiste islandaise Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir qui a déjà conquis notre pays. Enfin, la sixième édition de **DDESSIN** est également à découvrir. L'ambition de ce salon est de mettre en avant de jeunes artistes talentueux nationaux et internationaux. Parmi les 16 galeries présentes, on retrouve la Bruxelloise LMS Gallery qui présente les œuvres du Français Clément Denis, dont le sujet principal est l'illusion du mouvement.



Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir, *Captured*, 2012, papier artisanal et peinture à l'eau, reliure cousue, 24 x 33 cm. © de l'artiste / Courtesy Irène Laub Gallery / Drawing Now.

Fantastic Voyage (EN)

2013

By JBK Ransu

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Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir

A Fantastic voyage

When I was a child I saw the sci-fi movie *Fantastic Voyage* (1968) for the first time. The film, starring Stephen Boyd and Raquel Welch, tells a story about a selected group of scientists and specialists who are shrunk down to the size of somatic cells in order to travel in a vessel no larger than one micrometer through the body of a real sized man. Throughout the film the heroes make their way past various human organs and infrastructure of the body. They battle microscopic monsters and elude the dangers that a foreign micro-object might encounter inside a human body such as cell sucking threads that are woven together like nets, some weird sticky stuff that tries to suffocate them and bubble-like forms that bounce around the vessel large enough to swallow it whole. Luckily, for the shrunken heroes, the movie is American so after a hard day's work they save the day and exit the body through the man's right eye just in time to be enlarged again to their normal size.

The storyline of *Fantastic voyage* is of course an excuse to create scenarios that show the infamous visual wonders of inner space as other films during this time did with outer space, capturing the imagination of any person of any age, as he or she is confronted by an abstract world of a perfect organic geometric system that we call the human body.

I first saw a show of Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir's work in Gallery Hlemmur in 2002. The show consisted of rather minimalistic works, seemingly abstract, yet they struck me very physically. There were all these forms, lines, knots and dots that were visually uncanny to me but emotionally familiar. I was quite intrigued with her art and would follow it with great interest over the following years. Still, it was not until I saw her solo shows in Suðsuðvestur and The National Gallery in Iceland in 2007 and 2008 that I realized



Untitled - Barriers, Watercolour and traces of carbon on paper, 29,7x 21 cm, 2007.

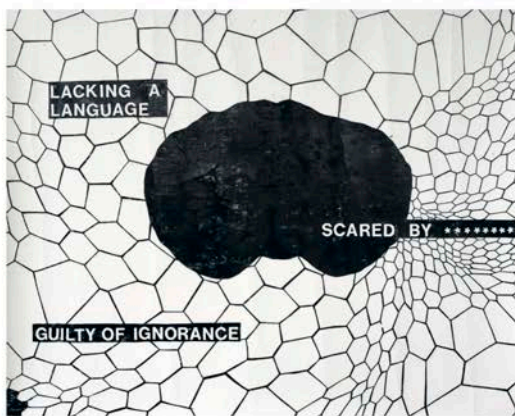
that her art was in fact a *fantastic voyage* that dealt with the visual wonders of inner space that is as fascinating to look at as that abstract world I remembered in that weird sci-fi movie from the 60's.

Fantastic Voyage (EN)

2013

By JBK Ransu

2/3



Stupidity, Gouache, acrylics, ink and varnish on carved paper, 68,4x84 cm., 2007.

Guðný Rósa was born in Reykjavík in 1969. She now lives and works in Brussels but takes equal part in the Icelandic art scene as she does in the Belgium one. Guðný Rósa works in various mediums, such as sculpture, sound, video, photography, drawings, collage, sewing and painting. Her shows are usually presented as installations where she combines different mediums. Watercolor has however always played an important role in her two dimensional works. But in recent years her use of water dissolvable materials has grown and it is safe to say that it is now a dominant medium in her art.

Guðný Rósa rarely uses just one kind of water dissolvable material in a picture. She mixes together gouache, watercolor, acrylics and ink or layers them over each other and then, in a rather unique way, cuts the skin of the paper and peels it off. In that way she creates clear white lines and forms. It is also one of the ways she writes text in her images, as for instance in the painting/drawing *Stupidity* where she began by covering the paper with gouache, acrylics and ink and from there on made a grid and text by cutting off the top skin of



View, Watercolor, gouache, ink and pencil on folded paper, 29,7x21 cm, 2007.

the paper and peeling it off. Ironically, the image in *Stupidity* does resemble a cell or perhaps a vessel floating through an organic grid system that might appear inside a body.

Guðný Rósa's pictures do point to an organic world that one may relate to the human body. Yet one cannot limit them in such figurative context. There is only the resemblance of the forms and structure of the internal human body. But it is not necessarily a human body. It may be any kind of body, actual or imaginative.

Fantastic Voyage (EN)

2013

By JBK Ransu

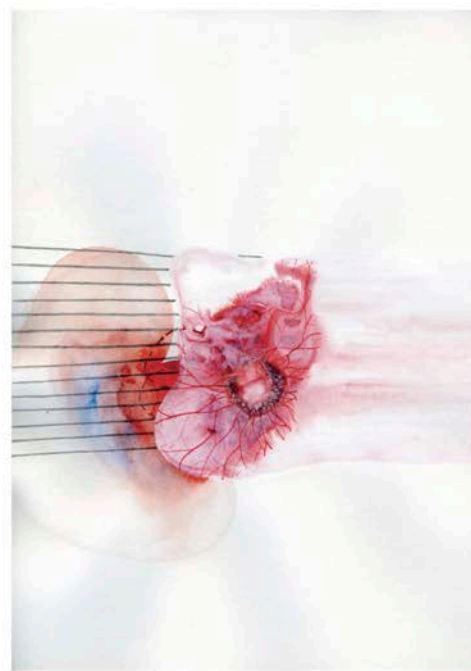
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Untitled - Captured, Watercolor, gouache, traces of carbon paper, pen and pencil on paper, 29,7x21 cm, 2005.

It is interesting to relate Guðný Rósa's paintings to the phenomenology of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his idea of "the lived body". Merleau-Ponty challenged Rene Descartes' body-mind dualism, "Corgito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am), that proclaimed the body to be a machine that is run by the mind. For Merleau-Ponty the body is not a machine but a living organism through which we body-forth our possibilities in the world. Our existence is therefore lived through our body that is not separated from the mind, for we are our body.

akvarellen 1/12



Formation, Watercolor, gouache, arabic gum and pencil on paper, 29,7x21 cm, 2006.

Perhaps this is one way of seeing Guðný Rósa's work, as the body of painting not run by an idea or concept, but painting that is its own body. For me, having followed her art for 10 years is therefore like having joined her in a *fantastic voyage* through the body of painting where I witness the same sort of abstract visual wonders that one might encounter traveling inside an organic system in a one micrometer vessel.

JBK RANSU

www.this.is/veransu/ransu

23

Tijdeloos geheugen (NL)

2008

By Filip Luyckx

1/2

Tijdeloos geheugen

Over het werkproces van Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir

Een reeks abstracte bewegingen op papier, met vage herkenningpunten. Dat is de visie van de buitenstaander bij een eerste confrontatie met de tekeningen van Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir. Elk werk is uniek en toch springt meteen in het oog dat ze letterlijk van dezelfde hand zijn. De kunstenaar gebruikt dan ook media die onvermijdelijk de persoonlijke inzet en gemoedsgesteeltenis verraden: de lijntekening, de collage, het aquarel en de gouache. Het nabootsen van dat werk is ook nog om een andere reden schier onmogelijk. Uit elk detail spreekt het rustig voortkabbende tijdsverloop dat ettelijke uren, dagen en weken van geconcentreerde eenzaamheid veronderstelt. Er is het vermoeden dat het werk ver in de tijd terugreikt.

Wanneer Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir een vel papier onder handen neemt, gaat daar al een voorgeschiedenis aan vooraf. Het zijn restanten van prille tekenactiviteit, maar evenzeer van allerhande schooloefeningen en notities uit het dagelijks leven. Ze bevatten reminiscenties aan de kindertijd in IJsland of de academieopleiding in Brussel. Een aantal vertoont sporen van vroeger gebruik, zelfs van andere mensen. Vaak reiken de startgegevens niet verder dan cijfermateriaal, vlekken of wat vluchtige krabbels. Zelden hadden die oorspronkelijke papieren grote kunstbedoelingen, maar ze zitten wel boordevol persoonlijke herinneringen. Andere mensen kunnen er in dat stadium nauwelijks iets mee aanvangen. Die herinneringsflarden lijken onzichtbaar voor de objectieve onderzoeksblik. Ze zouden voor eeuwig in de anonimiteit en vergetelheid opgaan. Maar voor het individu openen ze toegangspoorten tot intense herinneringen. Die betrokkenheid betekent niet dat alles haarscherp voor de geest kan worden gehaald. Het is geen herinnering van harde feiten en cijfers, wel onze eigen nalatenschap aan indrukken waar jaren van verwerking of vergeten op gevolgd zijn – ook vergeten is een vorm van verandering, de eenvoudige voortgang van de tijd alleen al verandert het perspectief op alle verleden voortdurend. In plaats van een

meetbare en documenteerbare werkelijkheid treedt de herinnering aan beleefde tijd naar voren, waarbij menselijke belevenissen centraal staan. De bredere context van die herinnering is vaak zoek geraakt. Juist alles waar de geschiedenis en wetenschap zich niet mee bezighouden, de schat aan niet thuis te brengen herinneringen, vormen de emotionele basis van het leven. Of we zulke herinnering willen koesteren, bezweren of bijstellen doet er niet toe. Ermee omgaan vergt nieuwe tijd en die duurt vaak langer dan het opdoen van de originele indrukken. Dat gaat gepaard met stilte en concentratie, maar vereist ook een concrete activiteit om niet in vruchteloze nostalgie weg te zinken. Vandaar dat de kunstenaar allerhande minutieuze bewerkingen uitvoert op het papier met vaak een repetitief en obsessief karakter: verknippen en lijmen, nummeren, beschilderen, uitspreiden, bedekken enz. Het is een vorm van recyclage van voorbijgefragmenteerd. Die verschillende etappes lijken erg tijdrovend maar daarin schuilt precies de waarde van het werk. Het uiterst langzaam herkneden van herinnering vertraagt de tijd en maakt de beleving des te intenser. We voelen vooral de intensiteit van de verwerkingstijd. Doorleefde intuïtie vormt de leidraad van haar werk, meer dan verhalen. De historische en biografische tijd worden ingeruild voor een tijdloze tijd.

De intense tijdbeleving haalt de overhand op de autobiografische anekdotes. Deze laatste variëren van tekening tot tekening, zodat die telkens aanleiding geven tot andere herinneringsprocessen en beeldoplossingen. Dat leidt niet tot een strakke geometrie met stereotiepe stijlenmerken. In de plaats komt er een organische omgang met het materiaal. De verwerking heeft veel weg van een intuïtieve reis over het papier waarvan de uitkomst onzeker is. Samen met de materiele vorm wordt het herinneringsbeeld gekoesterd, versneden en vervormd tot een leefbare realiteit. Doorheen de transformatie wordt het kinderbeeld geactualiseerd. Dezelfde intensiteit houdt zich juist door verandering overeind. Het proces ge-

tuigt van een fysieke en mentale weerstand tegen de vergetelheid. De brokstukken van het geheugen die dreigen te ontglijpen, worden getransformeerd tot een assemblage die verleden, heden en toekomst in harmonie brengt. Tijdens dat proces laat de kunstenaar zich meedrijven op cyclische tijdgolven in plaats van ze gewild naar haar hand te zetten. Ze heeft er nood aan zich in een zee van tijd onder te dompelen, waarbij de tijd tegelijk vertraagt en intensifieert. De innerlijke stilte laat toe de tijd tastbaar te maken. Op momenten van tijdloze concentratie volgen periodes waarin een bepaalde tekening opnieuw naar de achtergrond verdwijnt. Ze zijn nooit af, zolang ze niet worden ingelijst ten behoeve van een externe instantie.

Via geduldige handenarbeid palmt de kunstenaar territorium in op het papier. Het potlood weeft een net rond de tijdsfragmenten. Dat proces kan zich vrijwillige grenzen opleggen of telkens lagen toevoegen of wegvissen. Er groeit een complexe cartografie, die tegelijk eenvoudig tot stand komt. Zowel Gudny Rosa als de toeschouwer boren onbekende lagen aan van onbekende geschiedenissen, waarvan we de tekens niet (meer) (nog niet) begrijpen. Ze vormen een opeenstapeling van verschillende tijdperken en interpretaties. We staren naar een momentopname die sporen van alle vroegere processen insluit. Elke tekening heeft veel weg van een palimpsest of van een archeologische bodemstratificatie. Bij de geheugenprocessen stoot de kunstenaar op onbegrijpelijke codes, die ze recycleert en opnieuw loslaat. Elk beeld berust op losse geheugenfragmenten die zich voortdurend herpositioneren tegenover eerdere of latere ervaringen.

Het gelaagde landschap voert ons naar verinnerlijking. Visueel echter overheerst niet de indruk van een sterke dieptewerking. De stratificatie speelt zich overwegend af aan transparante oppervlaktelagen die de blik naar binnen uitnodigen. We kijken doorheen de herinnering en botsen op de materie van de drager. Daartussen ligt als het ware een vlies gespannen dat verschillende herinne-

Filip Luyckx

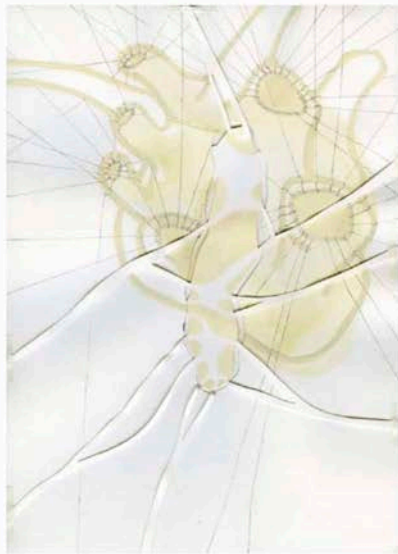
Head of publications of the Sint-Lukas Gallery and curator

Tijdeloos geheugen (NL)

2008

By Filip Luyckx

2/2



Untitled - Hjärtathraeding 2008



Untitled-vetur

ringslagen omvat. De transparantie zit hem al in de gebruikte materies, die een tactiel en vloeibaar karakter hebben. Het is alsof alles zich op een helder wateroppervlak afspeelt waarin een waterjuffer codes krast die zich dicht tegen de oppervlakte ophouden. Doorschijnende - of in elk geval vloeibare - materie draagt verreweg Gudny Rosa's voorkeur weg. Uitgesproken kleurgebruik vormt een zeldzaamheid. Er is een grote broosheid mee gemoeid in de uitvoering. Alles ligt zichtbaar voor ons uitgestald maar achter een waas die zonder de nodige codes niet meteen te ontcijferen valt. Die codes kunnen ons echter bij intense inleving van de hand worden gedaan. Ze zullen toegang geven tot eenieders persoonlijke worsteling met zijn verleden. Als algemene artistieke realiteit verwijzen ze naar de strijd tegen het geheugenverlies en slordige tijdconsumptie van de wereld. Het houdt een pleidooi in voor zorgzame omgang met leven, tijd en ecologie. Er is ontgensprekelijk een moreel aspect mee verbonden, dat zowel aanzet tot wenen als tot lachen met de gang van zaken in verleden, heden en toekomst. Het geregeld intreden in de eindeloze tijdsbeleving heelt de wonden van de wereld.

Vloeibare materie en doorschijnende vliezen stellen de wereld van de biologie aanwezig. De vormen hebben veel weg van complexe organen, die ze zelf uitdenkt. Andere aanknopingspunten vinden we bij herbaria, textielweefsels of iconen. Telkens duikt de complexe gelaagdheid aan de oppervlakte op, de vergeten betekenissen, de tactiele nabijheid en de blik op tijdloze belevingen. Wars van alle culturele conventies hanteert Gudny Rosa een symbolisch geladen abstractie. Nooit herhaalt een beeld zich routinematig. Elke keer vindt ze de symbolische kracht heruit vanuit een intense omgang met de herinnering. De concrete gebeurtenis is maar een aanleiding waar ze overheen stapt tot een houding die tegelijk afstand en betrokkenheid impliceert. Pool en tegenpool vallen samen in een houding die buiten de tijd treedt en er tegelijk middenin staat. Vluchtigheid en uitgesponnen tijd ontmoeten elkaar door de maatschappelijk gestructureerde tijd te verlaten. De zeggingskracht is zo sterk voelbaar dat er een symbolische werking van uitgaat op de aandachtige toeschouwer.

Filip Luyckx

Deze tekst maakt deel uit van de catalogus bij de tentoonstelling "La Durée" in de National Gallery of Iceland, met werk van Emmanuelle Antille (CH), Gabriela Fridriksdottir (IS) en Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir (IS). Deze laatste stelde in april / mei 2003 tentoon in de Sint-Lukasgalerie Brussel, alsook met dezelfde instelling op Art Brussels.

Tentoonstelling van 23.02 - 01.05.2008
Curator: Halldor Björn Runolfsson
Catalogus met bijdragen van Halldor Björn Runolfsson, Harm Lux, Oddny Eir AEvardsdottir en Filip Luyckx.
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www.listasafn.is

Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir is represented by Koraalberg Art Gallery, Antwerpen and Galerie Conrads, Düsseldorf.

Filip Luyckx

Head of publications of the Sint-Lukas Gallery and curator

Mask on Mask off (EN)

2005

By Halldor Björn Runolfsson

1/2

ARTISTreview

mask on, mask off

As our life progresses it dawns on us how much of our reality is hidden, not only to the external world but also to ourselves. Between the outer, perceptible world and our inner anatomical composition lies an ill-defined area, a mental, neurological no-man's-land, whose dimension is incommensurate. It can be vast as a continent and tiny as a grain, all according to the attention paid to it, or should we say, the attention which it demands. This is the area which Gudny Rosa Ingimarsdottir investigates, or rather, in which she operates, whereas it is from within that she carries out her exploration, metaphorically as a spelaeologist examines the interior of unknown caves.

THE ART OF GUDNY ROSA INGIMARSDOTTIR

There is less of metaphysics in her approach than might be expected from the terrain she chooses to explore, whereas she does not try to retrieve any systematic knowledge from these expeditions, only vague signs which she interprets in an exquisitely fragile way. Knowing the immateriality and inconsistency of the area in spatial terms, she does not dwell in it as if she were walking about on a firm ground. Familiarizing with, and understanding an entity which certainly exists but cannot be perceived demands sensitivity rather than senses, intuitive instinct rather than conceptual speculation. Gudny Rosa's experience of time and memory runs along similar lines. It consists of a duration in the Bergsonian sense, where even the actual sound of ticking and chiming clocks, indicating mathematical time, is presented as a *durée* and the pounding hammering of the measured hour is given a musical dimension.

Two things are worth retaining here; the absence of visual perception, which is hinted at by Gudny Rosa, herself, in her account of childhood recollections as a rationale to her *Requiem* project, and consequently the impossibility of relating sensation to its proper cause, which might explain the artist's difficulty when it comes to describing visually the most important things, which are synonymous with those responsible for the most enduring sensations. Describing her reminiscence, which she refers to as *frequent visits to her own memory*, she evokes auditory experience before any other - banging clocks and comforting baritone voices - and by referring to warm hands, follows it up with the faculty of touch. Neither sound nor touch are exactly the senses which first come to mind when we think of visual art

and artists, but on top of that, it seems that Gudny Rosa recalls these sketches from the past as having happened 'in a closed room' and 'behind a glass door'. Does it mean that even these childhood sensory impressions were not experienced under the best receptive conditions?

If this is the case, Gudny Rosa's perceptual limitations at the time - or her recollection of the incidents - can be compared to the trials of Beckett's hero in *L'Innommable*, whose position is determined in such a way as to make it impossible for him to apprehend successfully the obscure sensations that pass him by, which under better circumstances he would surely be able to define without difficulty. But compelled to the worst possible visibility he is obliged to inquire incessantly who might be moving in front of him. Gathering from her works, drawings, textiles, sculptural objects, found objects, photos, videos and audios, Gudny Rosa, as someone who senses space as sensation from within rather than a clearly defined geometrical entity from the outside, seems to shun spatial distance in order to get a direct hold of the detail. This perspective of closeness corresponds perfectly with the aforementioned description of childhood recollections where sight was overshadowed by other more immediate senses.

In *What is ours*, a video from 1998, which deals with the tender act of breastfeeding, an important light is cast on this immediate intimacy, which favours the detail at the expense of spatial distancing. In psychoanalytical terms, breastfeeding is the perfect symbol of the Pre-Oedipal stage, which to a certain extent is synonymous with Julia Kristeva's rhythmic chora, prior to Lacan's seminal mirror-stage, when

the child starts mastering language and discovers his, or her independent existence as a detached being. At its primordial stage of being, spatial sense, as well as temporal and representational perception, is for an infant highly confusing. Reality is either sheltering and satisfactory, or stifling and uncomfortable, whereas space as experienced on individual basis, apparently, does not exist yet. The world, which is composed of mother's soft voice and body, is perceived by the nursing through touch and hearing rather than sight. These are precisely the senses on which Gudny Rosa draws when describing her childhood sensations.

The order of her exhibition *Panic 2* at *Les Témoins Oculistes*, in Brussels 2001, with its careful arrangements also seems significant in this respect. The emphasis on a centrifugal, cavernous type of installation where the public had to scan the walls at extreme levels, as paintings of animals in a Magdalenian cave, in order to view the works distributed about them, almost from the floor to altitudes above its average height, created an unusual pattern. However, by turning his back on the empty space in the centre of the room made the spectator experience a different kind of spatial effect. Even the few freestanding three-dimensional works at the exhibition were by their location near the wall, made dependent of the verticality of the display.

The affinity between the full-scale spelaeological reality of the exhibition and Gudny Rosa's drawing, knitting and crochet is another trait worth studying. From the outset drawing has been her cherished activity and it still has a unique position in her art. Careful, playful, unpredictable and full of fantasy it



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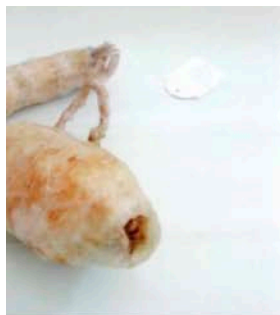
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Mask on Mask off (EN)

2005

By Halldor Björn Runolfsson

2/2



"Tuntable", detail
Exhibition in Sint-Lukas Gallery Brussels, April-May 2003



"yet another case of female depression", detail
Exhibition in Sint-Lukas Gallery Brussels, April-May 2003

ARTISTreview

depends for the most part on highly mature contours, rendered with an astounding precision. The positioning of the content on the A4 format speaks of Gudny Rosa's strong, undeliberate formal sense. The imagination and ease with which she seems to realize them is sometimes breathtaking.

Again two distinct elements are worth retaining; the effect of weaving, and the effect of mending by stitching, or plastering. Already in the mid-nineties Gudny Rosa's drawings had been likened to organic oddments such as bodily organs, and they still preserve a fair amount of surgical elements and traces such as bandage, compresses and pinholes. Some of the drawings are handled as if they were wounded and had to be dressed. They are pasted over with sticking plaster, forming various patterns, yet at the same time half obliterating something, perhaps an important information, beneath the bandage. Thus the treatment of the wounds amounts to a palimpsest where an old message is regularly coated over with a fresh layer. This procedure conveys the meaning of the cuts immediately from the medical sphere to the level of psychology, where they suddenly become extremely significant in a highly subjective game of hide and seek. The benevolent act of mending, healing and stitching suddenly becomes ambiguous, even suspicious, forfeiting a good deal of its primal ethical innocence. Covering up of information, in whatever way or circumstances, amounts to the worst of crimes in today's society of unimpeded communication.

The tension between disclosure and concealment is the problematical point of departure in Gudny Rosa's approach, its 'ripe moment' and key to her

reluctant perfectionism. Her use of text - not least in connection with the drawings - bearing on short, explicit statements and aphorisms, is the revelatory part, while the weaving in its most extensive sense is its latent half. A highly significant photograph in *Panic 2* shows the artist with a thin, translucent paradermatic mask possibly of acrylic substance.

Whether she is covering her face with this second skin or peeling it off is impossible to determine. Found and altered material, of clinical provenance, attests to Gudny Rosa's dermatological interests, a curiosity possibly related to her set of reasoning as a textile artist, regarding the Penelopean activity as a continuous narrative renovation, possibly even a reincarnation parallel to the spinning of a cocoon.

In this respect it is worth noting how much of the artist's textile works - textile in an extensive sense - are vessels in the double sense, recipients and organs, some of them even connected to the more extensive vascular system. The conveyed meaning is never far away, whereas typewritten labels tied to the items relate them to museum specimens. On the other hand, the texts on the labels, aphoristic as the texts in the drawings, may be seen to connect some of the items with symbolic references from the scriptures such as a 'vessel of wrath' or the 'weaker vessel', connotations, which in the case of Gudny Rosa, are perfectly appropriate.

But nowhere in Gudny Rosa's works is the association between text and textile as clear as in her many references to loss of language. In *Devoits - Mes mots perdus*, from 2001, two bottles, perfect vessels for messages, contain a bundle of Icelandic words, cut out of a dictionary, and a knitted wool garment as a

surrogate for words which the artist has forgotten. I miss not having your tongue to play with, from 2002, is a posterlike photo of a printed aphorism which expresses the trauma of loss of language, connected as part of a triptych with a photo of a vulval detail of Icelandic landscape, and a third photo of a pile of organic intestines.

Loss of language is synonymous with loss of the Heart - a white porcelain sculpture on a low aluminium pedestal, on display in *Panic 2* - which again refers to a curious, intestinal object labelled with a typewritten aphorism, *Yet another case of female depression*, as if an operation - possibly in order to remove the gall-bladder - had been effectuated in order to get rid of this infamous organ of melancholy. At first glance abjection comes to mind with all its terrifying loss of identity midway between subject and object, but gathering from Gudny Rosa's critical instinct nothing is more relevant to her art than Nietzsche and his ceaseless rebellion against cultural deflation and self-deception. Taking off one mask was according to him the same as putting up another, since truth in its most transparent form is beyond our limits. *We have art in order not to perish in truth*, he said, without meaning that we should hide in an illusion. But as Gudny Rosa seems to have understood through her art, truth is thing merely to approach, but let us not believe that we will ever get hold of it.

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