

### *Some Things...<sup>1</sup>*

Everything is in everything, the present moment as much so as any past moment. Just as in a clock's pendulum, a tempo is given, a regular one, the tempo peculiar to concentration and to patience, with a considered, acknowledged slowness. Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir's work affords us a breathing space, a contemplation, a pause in a society characterised by its frenzied pace. Her work lives to the rhythm of thoughts, to the rhythm of time, and it can only be comprehended over time. No fits and starts of fashion or character: the artist continues her journey, one moment after another, in meditative mode.

Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir's work is thus made of silences, restraint, and a great economy of means. In the solitude of her studio, which is both a cabinet of curiosities and a research laboratory, the artist works with whatever comes to hand: sheets of paper, cuttings of preciously kept earlier works, old drawings, salvaged vials, scraps of wallpaper, little notes, traces, souvenirs... So many elements that are just waiting to be recycled, metamorphosed, in order to form this peculiar universe. Through a subtle alchemy the scattered fragments assemble on the sheet of paper, in the display cases and at exhibitions. Nothing is ever fixed. These are parts of a whole that is constantly shifting, that keeps arranging and rearranging itself ad infinitum: what is here now is unique and will occur differently at a later date. A play of correspondences develops, a composition renewed each time, revealing the precious parts of the whole thus created. A constant to and from movement is initiated between the opposites. Empty and full spaces enter into a dialogue, past and present coexist. An aesthetics is constructed under the sign of soberness and the passage of time.

In the heart of this universe impressions and emotions are unveiled with modesty. Out of these sensations forms are born, whether abstract or figurative, meticulous drawings spreading over the white, blank page. The artist uses various techniques to dissolve colour, to blend it into the support and evoke matter by transparency. Water colour, ink, acrylics all hint at the circulation of fluids and at water as the source of all life. Figures produced in this way emerge out of the gestating organisms, the mutating cells which circulate freely over the sheet of paper.

The artist easily moves from painted elements and delicately executed pencil drawings, sometimes sewn with thread or even cut with a scalpel, to forms that are sculpted in space. Through various actions, such as drawing, scratching, scraping, sampling, sewing or crocheting, the hand executes specific, painstaking, sequenced gestures. Quasi-surgical acts and needlework — craft and domestic practices historically associated with women — combine, intertwine, merge, between reappropriation and subversion. So many activities linked to manipulation and repetition, and also referring back both to the rhythmic of original cell multiplication and to the importance of tactile contact with materials.

Out of those various actions a netting, a superimposition of strata is born, creating a sensitive matter that we will have to probe. Alveoli, grids, veins and nodal points spread like a net all over the sheet, or even outside the frame, over the walls, in a viral manner. Those linear motifs together weave a three-dimensional pattern, on which the forms, hung or just put down, set up new configurations. 'For people inhabit a world that consists, in the first place, not of things but of lines. After all, what is a thing or indeed a person, if not a tying together of the lines — the paths of growth and movement — of all the many constituents gathered there? Originally, "thing" meant a gathering of people, and a place where they would meet to resolve their affairs. As a derivation of the word suggests, every thing is a parliament of lines.'<sup>2</sup> Many of Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir's drawings suggest such a profusion, such a multitude of lines evoking the gathering of things dialoguing with one another.

Threads are also lines spreading out in space. From time immemorial human beings have been making threads as much as drawing them on a support. 'It is revealing that we use the same verb, to draw, to refer to the activity of the hand both in the manipulation of threads and in the inscription of traces.'<sup>3</sup> Physical, material lines such as wool, sewing thread, rubber bands, the magnetic tape of retrieved audio cassettes... these all stretch over the sheet or assemble into volumes. Thread here is the material which makes it possible to draw the outline of a shape.

Contrasting with such diluted organic images and revealed patterns, some text often appears, creating a supplementary language that needs to be deciphered. 'If "line" began as a thread rather than a trace, so did "text" begin as a meshwork of interwoven threads rather than of inscribed traces. The verb "to weave", in Latin, was *texere*, from which are derived our words "textile" and — by way of the French *tistre* — "tissue", meaning a delicately woven fabric composed of a myriad of interlaced threads.<sup>4</sup> Text and texture are closely linked, as both are produced by the entanglement of scattered elements, in which time and space fade away to be replaced by suspended moments, by a boundless vision. There is also a relationship of forms with biology: 'Anatomists would go on to adopt this compositional metaphor to describe the organs of the body, said to consist of epithelial, connective, muscular and nervous tissues. They would write of how the surfaces of these organs, illuminated by skilled anatomical vision, are rendered transparent, revealing their underlying linear structure.'<sup>5</sup> From a production bringing together know-how, various tools and materials, forms are born which respond to one another within a work the lines of which draw from the source of the living, from the very heart of every existence.

But the text also has its own reverberation. It appears in places in the style of a haiku, a piece of poetry emerging from the paper or the wall, like a murmur breaking the silence, in the image of that *guilty of ignorance*<sup>6</sup> etched into the picture rail of a gallery. Language as inscription, as interpellation. Those brief, fleeting sentences are the expression of inner voices, of ponderings, without any further explanation, whether in Icelandic, in French or in English. Three languages which keep alternating. This presence of writing is another way of occupying the space of the other. To capture the attention of the 'gazer', to establish *the soft distance between us*.<sup>7</sup>

Some untranslated texts, inverted, or else partially cut out, make readability and comprehension difficult, if not impossible. The work is in the image of every memorialisation, making some fragments of a life, mementos and other traces of our presence re-emerge from oblivion. Just like a palimpsest, the work reveals concealed images and stories, between fiction and reality, conscious and unconscious projections, which will remain unknown to us or will reveal themselves in a progressive, piecemeal manner, as nothing is ever given at once. From minute details you slip imperceptibly towards other almost infinite spaces, getting involved in multiple strata unveiling visible and concealed forms.

Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir unfolds a universe on the borders between the living and the sensory, the real and the fantasised. A subtle world combining form and the formless, technicality and subtlety, in which the thinking body is subjected to inner emotions and external stimuli, a duality that constitutes our humanity as much as the necessary demand of alterity.

- Catherine Henkinet, curator at ISELP and art critic Brussels (BE)

<sup>1</sup> *some things...* refers to the title given by Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir to her monographic exhibition at ISELP, Brussels, from 23 January to 21 March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2007, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.84.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, id.

<sup>6</sup> *guilty...*, 2018. In situ engraving, various dimensions. A work engraved by Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir in the wall of the gallery for the exhibition *Politics of Discontent*, Irene Laub Gallery, Brussels, 12.01 -24.02.2018.

<sup>7</sup> A recurring annotation in the artist's drawings since 2001.