



Steingrímur Eyfjörð – at the Palazzo Bianchi Michiel

10 June – 21 November 2007

Steingrímur Eyfjörð

Iceland has had an official presence at the Venice Biennale since 1984. This year, the Icelandic Pavilion will be located at the beautiful Palazzo Michiel on the Canale Grande, a few minutes' walk from the Rialto Bridge and close to the Ca' d'Oro vaporetto stop.

Steingrímur Eyfjörð has been selected to represent Iceland at the 52nd International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. The artist will produce a group of new works collectively entitled *The Golden Plover Has Arrived*, commissioned by Christian Schoen, Director of the Center for Icelandic Art and curated by Hanna Styrismisdóttir, an independent curator based in Reykjavík.

Steingrímur Eyfjörð is one of the foremost of a generation of artists who came to prominence in Iceland during the 1970s. His prolific output over the past 25 years draws on his experience not only as artist but as a comic strip author, magazine editor, writer, curator and teacher. His work employs a wide variety of media, including photography, comic strip, video, painting, sculpture, performance, writing and installation.

His art may appear equally diverse conceptually: founded on influences as disparate as folk tales, Icelandic sagas, women's fashion magazines, religion, superstition, critical theory and many other current topics, Eyfjörð's chains of association intersect at a nodal point of multiple meaning, forming a body of work that is multi-layered and at times perplexing yet always reveals an articulate and unexpected approach to the issues at hand.

Art historian Elena Filipovic has said of Eyfjörð's work: 'Confusion, longing, and frustration are some of Eyfjörð's underlying subjects but these terms also inevitably describe how one feels in front of his works. His investigations of materiality and form can seem absurd or enigmatic and psychologically charged, yet they almost always prompt an awareness of the emotional, physical, and cognitive experience of art.'

(Steingrímur Eyfjörð, *The National Gallery of Iceland*, 2006)

The Golden Plover Has Arrived

The golden plover is a small wading bird, regarded as the harbinger of spring in Iceland. Its arrival in the country in late March, early April, is invariably announced in the local media.

In *The Golden Plover Has Arrived*, composed of 14 individually titled works, Eyfjörð scrutinizes the culture, economy and politics of various moments in Icelandic history, in a deconstruction of prevailing interpretations of the creation of modernity in the country. As part of his work, Eyfjörð consulted and collaborated with people from all walks of life, among them artists and academics. He also visited a medium who put him in contact with a hidden person (a common Icelandic myth), normally invisible to human eyes. The purpose of this was to buy a mythical being – an elf-sheep – for *The Sheep Pen*, the central work in *The Golden Plover*. This somewhat surreal act highlights one of the most intangible concerns in Eyfjörð's work: his interest in the function of consciousness in the construction of physical reality. This aspect of Eyfjörð's work is also a reflection of a belief and culture particular to Iceland, and can be further explored in the curator's introduction in the Biennale catalogue.

A highly acclaimed exhibition of his work at the National Gallery of Iceland in spring 2006 provided a retrospective of Eyfjörð's significant contribution to contemporary art in the country. He has exhibited extensively in Iceland as well as internationally, including solo and group exhibitions at the Reykjavík Art Museum, the National Gallery of Iceland, Akureyri and Kopavogur Art Museums, the Living Art Museum, Den Haag Gemeente Museum, The Royal College of Art in London, Mücsarnok in Budapest, the Centre International d'Art Contemporain at Carros, the Meilahti Art Museum in Helsinki and the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo. In 2006 he was selected for the Carnegie Art Award and in 2002 he received the Icelandic DV cultural prize for visual art.

Location Palazzo Bianchi Michiel,
Cannaregio 4391/A-Strada Nova
(Vaporetto Ca' d'Oro)

Commissioning Institution
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Stux Gallery
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Biennale di Venezia
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Notes to Editors

- Steingrímur Eyfjörð was born in 1954, in Reykjavík, Iceland. He graduated from the Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts in Reykjavík in 1978 and went on to study at the Ateneum in Helsinki, Finland (1980) and the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, Holland (1983). In 2006 Eyfjörð was honoured with a retrospective at the National Gallery of Iceland which provided an important overview of his significant contribution to contemporary art in the country. His numerous other solo exhibitions have included *Bones in an Avalanche* (101 Gallery, Reykjavík, 2006), *Cowboys and Indians* (Kunstraum Wohnraum, Akureyri, 2005), *Wuthering Heights* (101 Gallery, 2004), *After Image* (Gallery Kling og Bang, Reykjavík, 2004) and *Projection* which premiered at Kopavogur Art Museum in Iceland and subsequently travelled to OBK Gallery (Oslo, 2001). Eyfjörð has also been included in many group exhibitions both in Iceland and internationally. He was selected for the Carnegie Art Award 2006, for exhibitions at Heine Onstad Kunstcenter, Oslo, Meilahti Museum, Helsinki, Konstakademien, Stockholm, Centre International d'Art Contemporain at Carros, Reykjavík Art Museum, the Royal College of Art, London and Den Frie Udstilling, Copenhagen. In 2004, Eyfjörð was selected for the Carnegie Art Award for the first time, for exhibitions at Kopavogur Art Museum in Iceland, Konstakademien, Stockholm, Kunsthalle Helsinki, Charlottenburg, Copenhagen, Kunsternes hus, Oslo and Victoria Miro Warehouse, London. In 2003 he was included in the exhibitions *Icelandic Art from 1960 – 1980* and *Icelandic Art from 1980 – 2000* at the National Gallery of Iceland. In 2002 he received the Icelandic DV cultural prize for visual art. He is represented by the Stux Gallery in New York.
- Iceland has had a formal presence at the Biennale di Venezia since 1984. This year, the Icelandic Pavilion will be located in the city centre for the first time, in the beautiful Palazzo Bianchi Michiel. The Palazzo Michiel, also known as “Dal Brusa” after a great fire in 1774 that damaged the pre-existing gothic building, was renovated in 1777 with the financial backing of the Signoria. It is conveniently located on the Canale Grande, close to the Rialto Bridge and steps away from the Ca d'oro vaporetto stop, on line 1.
- In recent years, Iceland has been represented by Gabriela Fridriksdóttir (2005), Rúrí (2003) and Finnbogi Pétursson (2001). Although Iceland has formally participated in the Biennale since 1984, it has nonetheless had a presence intermittently since 1960, with Sigurdur Gudmundsson exhibiting in the Nordic Pavilion in 1978, Magnus Pálsson in the Danish Pavilion in 1980 and Jon Gunnar Arnason and Kristján Gudmundsson representing Iceland in 1982.

Icelandic Pavilion

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The Golden Plover Has Arrived

- The Center for Icelandic Art (CIA.IS) is the platform for Icelandic visual art activities. CIA.IS promotes Icelandic art by connecting the local visual art community with the international art network. CIA.IS facilitates national and international collaborations in order to improve opportunities for Icelandic artists in their homecountry and to increase their visibility abroad.
- The exhibition catalogue, published by Loan er komin ehf., The Center for Icelandic Art and the Reykjavík Art Museum, will be available during the vernissage days and beyond.
- Steingrímur Eyfjörð's exhibition at the Icelandic Pavilion is made possible through the generous support of the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science in Iceland, Baugur Group, Landsvirkjun, Landsbanki, Glitnir, the City of Reykjavík, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Iceland and Tryggingamiðstöðin, as well as Icelandair, Islandtours, Italy and Vodafone, Germany. The exhibition is produced in collaboration with The Reykjavík Art Museum.
- Dr. Christian Schoen is Commissioner of the Icelandic Pavilion. Born in 1970 in Germany, Schoen studied Art History, Byzantine Art History, Politics and Psychology at the Universities of Kiel and Munich and holds a PhD in art history (2001). He was Head Curator of the exhibition space “lothringer 13” in Munich (2000 – 2003), Project Manager for the Cultural Department of the city of Munich (2001) and has served as Director of Osram Art Projects in Munich since 2001. In 2005 Dr. Schoen was appointed Director of the Center for Icelandic Art (CIA.IS).
- Hanna Styrmiðdóttir is curator of the Icelandic Pavilion in 2007. An independent curator based in Reykjavík, she has curated numerous exhibitions in Iceland, including *Grus* at the Nordic House, Reykjavík (2005), co-curated with Rúrí, Iceland's representative at the 50th Venice Biennial, *Matthew Barney's Cremaster Plate* at the Living Art Museum, Reykjavík (2003) and *The Dome* at the Reykjavík Art Museum (2003). She has held positions at several institutions including The Nordic House in Reykjavík, the Reykjavík Art Museum and holds a number of advisory boards. She was the Reykjavík correspondent for *Contemporary Magazine* from 2002 – 2003. Hanna holds a post-graduate degree in Critical Studies from Malmö Art Academy and Lund University in Sweden (2004), an MA in Visual Arts from Chelsea College of Art, London (1996), and a BFA in Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design, Paris and New York (1993).



la Biennale di Venezia

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The Golden Plover

Bronze
45 x 95 x 69 cm
Photo by Sigurjón Ragnar



The Sheep Pen, detail

Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Photo by Spessi