



PRESS RELEASE

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Pavilion of Iceland invites Homo Sapiens to become *Chromo Sapiens* at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Icelandic artist Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter and curator Birta Guðjónsdóttir have transformed a warehouse in Giudecca into a multi-sensory, cavernous environment where colour, sound and irresistible textures that guides visitors on a journey through a new hypernatural world

Chromo Sapiens

Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter
Pavilion of Iceland at the Biennale Arte 2019
11 May - 24 November 2019

Chromo Sapiens is a visceral provocative work that evokes a desire to return to nature through a twisted tangle of multi-colored furry surfaces. Murmuring sound merges with chromatic mossy structures, gloomy earth hues, and shimmering psychedelic neon tufts. An immersed experience of touch and visual stimuli erupts with a cacophonous amount of Shoplifter's signature material synthetic hair extensions.

A commissioned musical opus by Shoplifter's contemporaries, the Icelandic cult metal band HAM plays an essential role in the installation. Dissonant compositions echo throughout the tactile walls reflecting HAM's primal trembling dark tones and frequencies. A predestined collaboration, *Chromo Sapiens* mirrors a lifetime of shared inspiration since adolescence for Shoplifter and HAM, mutually rooted in their Icelandic heritage.

Shoplifter's work sits in the realm between visual arts, performance and fashion, anchored in a fascination with pop culture and mass production, combined with a keen sense of humor, joy of craft, and miraculous ability to transform synthetic materials into sculptural environments.

Curator Birta Guðjónsdóttir has previously collaborated on three projects from Shoplifter's series titled *Nervescape*; *Nervescape II* at Havremagasinet Cultural Center in Boden, Sweden (2013),

Nervescape IV at Momentum 8 – Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art in Moss, Norway (2015), *Nervescape VII* at the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik (2017).

Birta Guðjónsdóttir notes: “*Shoplifter has developed unique ways of working with textiles in space to critical acclaim and tremendous public appreciation. It is exciting to see our continuing collaboration take us to Venice where she will mount her largest installation to date, a site-specific emotive and contemplative experience. One enters the pavilion as Homo Sapiens and exits as Chromo Sapiens.*”

Iceland has participated in the Biennale Arte since 1960. The Icelandic Pavilion is commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with the Reykjavik-based Icelandic Art Center (IAC). Björg Stefánsdóttir, Director of IAC says: “*The International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is the most prestigious and world renowned art biennial in the world and Iceland’s solid participation throughout the years represents a key opportunity to connect the abundant Icelandic art scene with the international landscape. We are thrilled to participate in this major event by commissioning Shoplifter’s new project.*”

An artist special edition *Chromo Sapiens* LP vinyl record and publication will be available at the Icelandic Pavilion which includes three commissioned soundscapes and an anthem by the band HAM, an interview between curator Alanna Heiss and Shoplifter, and essays by Birta Guðjónsdóttir, Hilton Als, Jen DeNike, Oddný Eir Ævarsdóttir, and Timothy Morton.

Join the conversation on social media follow [@IcelandicPavilion](#) and [@ShoplifterArton](#) Instagram, using the hashtags [#ChromoSapiens](#), [#Shoplifter](#), [#IcelandicPavilion2019](#) and [#BiennaleArte2019](#)

Image: Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter. Photo: Magnus Unnar. Courtesy of the artist.

Exhibition details

Chromo Sapiens

Pavilion of Iceland at the Biennale Arte 2019

11 May - 24 November 2019

Location: Spazio Punch, Giudecca

Vaporetto stop: Palanca

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Notes to Editors

Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter(b. 1969) is an Icelandic artist based in New York. For 15 years, she has explored the symbolic nature of hair and its visual and artistic power. Working with both synthetic and natural hair, she creates sculptures, wall murals and site-specific installations, exploring themes of vanity, self-image, fashion, beauty and popular myth.

Shoplifter's most recent work includes solo exhibitions at Kiasma - The Finnish National Gallery of Contemporary Art, The National Gallery of Iceland, The Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and The Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art in Australia. Other notable projects include her large window installation created in collaboration with art collective a.v.a.f for MoMA New York in 2008 and her contribution to the Liverpool Biennial in the UK in September 2010. In 2011 Shoplifter received The Nordic Award in Textiles with a large solo exhibition at the Textile Museum of Borås, Sweden. That same year she was awarded The Prince Eugen Medal for artistic achievement from the King and Royal Crown of Sweden. For further information:<http://www.shoplifter.us/>

Birta Guðjónsdóttir(b. 1977), is an Icelandic curator based in Reykjavik and Berlin. From 2014 - 2018 she held the position of Chief Curator at the *National Gallery of Iceland*, Reykjavik. She co-curated *Momentum 8 – Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art, Norway*, in 2015 and was a guest curator of the Nordic Art Triennial at Eskilstuna Art Museum, Sweden in 2013. Guðjónsdóttir has independently curated over twenty exhibitions in cities such as Basel, Berlin, Boden, Copenhagen, Oslo, Melbourne, New York and St. Petersburg, as well as across most art museums and art spaces in Iceland.

Other institutions she has worked with in the past include *The Living Art Museum*, Reykjavik (director, 2009-2011); exhibition space *101 Projects*, Reykjavik (artistic director, 2008-2009); *MuHKA; Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp*, Belgium (assistant curator, 2008); SAFN-Collection of Contemporary Art, Reykjavik (curator, 2005-2008) as well as having participated in the *Nordic Baltic Curatorial Platform*, initiated by FRAME, Finland; the *Curatorial Intensive program of ICI: Independent Curators International*, New York; and *The Cornwall Workshop*, organised by Tate St. Ives.

About the Icelandic Art Center

Based in Reykjavik, the Icelandic Arts Center (IAC) is dedicated to promoting Icelandic visual arts internationally. Affiliated with Iceland's Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the IAC strengthens networks between the visual arts scene in Iceland and the global cultural sphere. Through funding and logistical assistance, IAC assists Icelandic artists and arts professionals in producing projects abroad, and facilitates cooperation with public and private associations, organisations, and enterprises worldwide. The Icelandic Art Center (IAC) is Commissioner of the Icelandic Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia on behalf of the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. www.icelandicartcenter.is