

Icelandic Pavilion unveils *Perpetual Motion* a large-scale multisensory sculpture by Sigurður Guðjónsson, at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia



Sigurður Guðjónsson, Installation view: *Perpetual Motion*, 2022, courtesy of the artist and BERG Contemporary, photo by Ugo Carmeni

Venue: Artiglierie building, Arsenale, Venice

Curator: Mónica Bello

Commissioner: Sigurður Guðjónsson, Icelandic Art Center

The Icelandic Pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia opens to the public this week, unveiling *Perpetual Motion*, a multisensory sculpture by Sigurður Guðjónsson. The artwork offers a poetic exploration of materiality at edge of the boundaries of perception, powerfully combining moving images and sound to activate the space and create an entrancing, meditative experience for visitors. The Icelandic Pavilion is curated by Mónica Bello and is located in the Arsenale, for the first time this year.

Sigurður Guðjónsson is best known for his striking time-based media works that often focus on man-made machinery and technical relics, investigating their enigmatic, hidden elements, just beyond our field of vision. The artist experiments with camera lenses, perspective, light, and motion, amplifying and observing these forms and the transformations that take place as they interact with their environment. *Perpetual Motion* is staged as a split screen installation, with a six-metre-high vertical screen, connected to a large-scale floor projection, that occupies most of the exhibition space. The screens depict the constant drift of metal dust, amplified and magnified through the artist's camera lens. Visitors can immerse themselves in the movement of the abstract material, as it warps and distorts, suggesting new shapes and imagery, such as the surface of an outermost planet.

The interplay of sound and vision features throughout Guðjónsson's oeuvre. The artist uses intricate soundscapes as the foundation of his works, drawing out the acoustic properties of his visual investigations to create a stronger link to the subject matter. *Perpetual Motion* includes a visceral soundtrack, developed by Guðjónsson and Icelandic musician Valgeir Sigurðsson, which responds to the granulated texture of the matter in the moving images, using stacked electromagnetic sounds, that have been manipulated via granular synthesis. The soundscape fills the Pavilion and envelops visitors as they enter the artwork, forging a deeper connection with the frequencies of the metal dust as it moves and pulsates across the screens' surface.

Sigurður Guðjónsson says *'I am proud to present Perpetual Motion at the Icelandic Pavilion. The artwork is intended as a play on the boundaries between reality and fiction, depicting something that is real but usually beyond our field of perception. I hope to offer visitors a poetic, multisensory experience of materiality, that encompasses scale, light, dimension and motion, using sound and video to transform the space in a sculptural way.'*

This project has been realised in collaboration with Mónica Bello, the Curator of the Icelandic Pavilion. Bello holds the position of Curator and Head of Arts at the CERN, the European Laboratory for Particle Physics in Geneva, fostering dialogues between artists, particle physicists and engineers at one of the world's leading laboratories. Bello's curatorial work focuses on the narratives in today's techno-scientific culture and how artists instigate new enquiries around emergent phenomena.

Mónica Bello says *'It is a pleasure to unveil Sigurður Guðjónsson's work to international visitors at the Biennale di Venezia. Throughout this project, he has inspired me with his deep fascination with material natures and his unique creative process that uses minimalist environments, enriched by sound and video. Perpetual Motion draws attention to the continual flux of energy and matter and celebrates camera, vision, experimentation and perceptual spaces.'*

To mark the opening of the Icelandic Pavilion, a new catalogue on Sigurður Guðjónsson's career and practice will be available to purchase from the Biennale Bookshop and online. The book, which has been designed by Studio Studio (Arnar Freyr Guðmundsson, Birna Geirfinnsdóttir) in Iceland and produced in collaboration with the Reykjavik Art Museum and Distanz Publishing in Berlin, features artwork stills and installation photography of *Perpetual Motion* and selected recent and past works, with a curatorial essay by Mónica Bello.

This has been a significant year for Guðjónsson, who has exhibited and performed internationally ahead of his presentation at the Biennale Arte 2022. He will also bring his work to audiences at home, performing his new multi-disciplinary work *Enigma*, in collaboration with composer Anna Þorvaldsdóttir and multi-Grammy nominees The Spektral Quartet at the Reykjavík Arts Festival in June. This will be followed by a major solo exhibition at the Reykjavík Art Museum in October, coinciding with the installation of *Perpetual Motion* at BERG Contemporary, the artist's representative gallery.

Iceland has exhibited at the Biennale Arte since the 1960s and has presented its own national pavilion since 1984. This year's presentation builds on Iceland's intriguing, atmospheric displays of contemporary art in Venice, which have most recently included Shoplifter's neon, hypernatural hair installation in 2019 and Egill Sæbjörnsson's trolls in 2017. The Icelandic Pavilion is commissioned by the Icelandic Art Center, which promotes and supports Icelandic contemporary art internationally through grants, collaborations and projects.

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To access the press kit please visit: <https://egnyte.suttoncomms.com/fl/NFNF0eCZop>



Visitor Information

The Icelandic Pavilion is located in the Artiglierie building of the Venetian Arsenale (nearest vaporetto stop: Arsenale).

Address:

Sestiere Castello, Campo della Tana 2169/F, 30122 Venice, Italy

Notes to Editors

Sigurður Guðjónsson

Sigurður Guðjónsson is an Icelandic visual artist based in Reykjavík. His work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world, in such institutions as the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik Art Museum, Scandinavia House in New York, BERG Contemporary in Reykjavík, Frankfurter Kunstverein in Germany, Arario Gallery in Beijing, Liverpool Biennial in the UK, Tromsø Center for Contemporary Art in Norway, Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, and Bergen Kunsthall in Norway. In 2018 he was awarded the Icelandic Art Prize, Visual Artist of the Year, for his exhibition *Inlight*, commissioned by Listasafn ASÍ, which featured video installations set within the defunct St. Joseph's Hospital in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland. He often collaborates with musical composers, resulting in intricate work, allowing the visual compositions to enchantingly merge with the musical ones in a single rhythmic and tonal whole. More information about Sigurður Guðjónsson is available [here](#).

Mónica Bello

Mónica Bello is a Spanish curator and art historian. Since 2015 she has held the position of Curator & Head of Arts at CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Geneva. In this role she curates the research-led artistic residencies at the Laboratory and the new art commissions that reflect on the exchanges between artists and scientists at CERN. Most recently, she curated the exhibition *Quantum* which has been touring different art institutions in Europe since 2018, and was the guest curator of the Audemars Piguet Art Commission for Art Basel 2018. Prior to her arrival in Geneva she held the position of Artistic Director of VIDA (2010-2015) at Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, a pioneering award that explored cross-cultural expressions around the notion of life. From 2007-2010, she initiated and ran the Department of Education at Laboral Centro de Arte, Gijón (Spain). She has curated exhibitions and events across Europe and further afield, featuring contemporary artists, designers, scientists, and theorists of different disciplines. As an internationally recognised figure within art and science networks, Bello is a regular speaker at conferences and participates in selection committees, advisory boards and mentorship programs. More information about Mónica Bello is available [here](#).

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, the 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 Pavilion of Iceland at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia on behalf of the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and has been commissioner since 2007. More information is available on the Icelandic Art Centre's [website](#).

Publication

The exhibition catalogue is available to purchase online from [Distanz](#).