

## **Sóley Ragnarsdóttir: Cherrystone**

29 April – 6 June 2022

*Formation is proud to present the gallery's first solo exhibition with the Danish/Icelandic artist Sóley Ragnarsdóttir. The spectator is let into a hyper-ornamented and meticulously composed universe, wherein acrylics and epoxy are mixed with with amber, seashells and ocean polished glass pieces on canvas, wood and decorated cloth napkins.*

Based in the outskirts of Denmark, in Thy - where nature and humans intertwine - Ragnarsdóttir unfolds her practice in an intimate collaboration with the defining trademarks of the local environment.

Living here, side by side, amber hunters, fishers and surfers have a clear influence on the artists unique, visual expression. Over the years this has resulted in, amongst other things, hanging mobiles made from surfboard material, a collaboration with a local boatbuilder and many amber hunts.

Ragnarsdóttir draws parallels to the British Arts & Crafts movement, the American Pattern and Decoration, as well as her own Icelandic background, mixing natural and synthetic materials in her discovery of the significance of the decorative, and its construction in various cultural contexts, and in an art-historic perspective. Through this, the artist investigates how we regard nature, and offer us another - less structured and more sensible - method to exist in the world and directs our gaze to the life-giving connections and symbiosis's that occur when otherwise separate materials, stories and worlds meet. In this brave and thoughtfully chosen combination of materials, the artist emphasizes the artistic value of the decorative, as something that has its own space and right in contemporary art.

For *Cherrystone* – a title that refers to a specific clam specie connoting the relationship between the sweet berry and the sea organism - Ragnarsdóttir expands her sculptural approach to painting by challenging herself to create paintings, that do not conform to the rectangular. The artist has created a series of wooden forms, that are then meticulously painted. The works that explore patterns, repetitions and composition, balance the hyper-decorative with the tight and simple and send visual thoughts towards eyes, patterns, closed seashells - or a place where the abstract and figurative meet. The wooden relief paintings are supplemented by a large double painting - a dyptique, where patterns, thousands of brush strokes and repetitions fill out the canvas and unfolds ,as a kind of entity, on the wall.

Side by side with the paintings are a series of new napkin-paintings that combine relations between contemporary culture and industrial mass-production. The napkins, that are dated back to 1975, are combined with rocks, shells and amber, a 50 million year old time capsule, that testifies to a time before the anthropocene era. The pieces then become a reflection on the time before. The time Ragnarsdóttirs mother grew up in as well as the time of the amber, a subtle “fuck you” to the patriarchy and a gaze towards something new and undefined. The small, detailed works become resilient encapsulations of contrasting phenomenon, such as dispensable culture and overload, capitalism and feminism, mass production and handicrafts, the factual and the imaginary, the mundane and the exceptional.

With a refined sense of mixing the contrasting materials, the hypnotic effect of the ornamented repetition and the use of colors, Sóley Ragnarsdóttir summons a fully molded

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and uncompromising visual universe, that gently, but assertively, guides us to a new community shared by nature and people.

Sóley Ragnarsdóttir (born 1991, DK/IS) lives and works in Thy in Northern Jutland. She has a degree from Städelschule, Frankfurt, Germany 2014-2019. Notable exhibitions include Städel Museum (Frankfurt), Historisches Museum (Frankfurt), Jean Claude Maier (Frankfurt), Kunstforum (Darmstadt) og Overgaden (Copenhagen).