

In 2024, Sóley Ragnarsdóttir's solo exhibition *Queen of Hearts* will be presented first at Gerðarsafn Museum (Iceland) and then at Augustiana Art Gallery (Sønderborg). The destinations mark two poles in the artist's biography – Sóley's first institutional exhibition in her home country, and her first solo exhibition in Als, where she grew up.

Sóley currently lives and works in Stenbjerg, Thy, where her nearest neighbour is the North Sea. In her works, she mixes locally found materials – amber, shells, shards of glass polished by the sea, and ocean plastic found on the beach etc. – with acrylic paint on canvas and napkins hardened with the use of epoxy. For several generations, napkins were collector's items in the artist's family. Sóley perpetuates that practice and invests it with new meaning. Ocean plastic and napkins are both 'modest' materials – a virtually invisible part of society's throw-away culture. But the artist transforms the materials into highly decorative, expressive works – round, two-dimensional objects hanging on a wall, or three-dimensional sculptural shapes.

Ragnarsdóttir's works are not paintings in the traditional sense: formally they hover between two-dimensional and three-dimensional. Nor does she use canvas as a surface; she uses napkins hardened with epoxy and acrylic paint. The napkins – the formal basis of her works – also form the conceptual framework of the exhibition. Ragnarsdóttir's mother and grandmother have systematically collected napkins since the middle of the last century, both in Iceland and in Denmark. Now the artist has continued collecting them, but added new artistic meaning to them. Sóley turns these modest objects, which, like rubbish on a beach, reflect the 'disposable' culture of modern society, into expressive, decorative works. The napkins are also tangible remnants of past female culture, evoking togetherness, care and affection.

Ragnarsdóttir's work is multi-layered, featuring both feminist and ecological aspects. The artist regards collecting and creating as a matter of inheritance, both in the present and for the future, highlighting how, throughout our lives, we can care for the things and places with which we have a personal bond. But Ragnarsdóttir's work is also a reaction to the vast polluting impact that humans have on their environment and nature – particular in the sea and coastal areas.

The exhibition is an apt call to stop right now and look down into sand – and forget oneself in the details and decorations.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sóley Ragnarsdóttir (b. 1991) graduated from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste-Städelschule Frankfurt/Main in 2019, and in 2021 was awarded Overgaden's one-year resource programme INTRO, which supports recently artist graduates. Ragnarsdóttir works have been featured in both solo and group exhibitions, both internationally and in Europe, at institutions such as Sorø Art Museum (DK); Baader-Meinhof (Nebraska, USA); Galleri Formation (Copenhagen, DK); and Y Gallery (Kopavogur, IS). She was born in Iceland, but grew up in Sønderborg, where her parents have lived since the late 1990s.

The exhibition was curated by Heiðar Kari Rannversson and supported by Det Obelske Familiefond, the Danish Arts Foundation, Knud Højgaards Fond, Iceland Visual Arts Fund, Augustinus Fonden and Ny Carlsbergfondet.