

Here's what happened: You meet someone and play them your current favourite song, only to find out that it's their favourite, too. Yes! Then you listen to it forever – or at least for six hours. If you don't just have a weakness for pop music, but also for melancholy, and if you're also a visual artist called Ragnar Kjartansson, then you might ask the band (in this case, The National), whether they would like to play the song (in this case, *Sorrow*) in New York's MoMA PS1 non-stop for six consecutive hours – and then you make a film about the whole thing. This is the impact of these six hours: Exhaustion sets in, the song begins to change under the weight of time and the musicians begin to experiment cautiously. There are clashes and friction between pathos and irony, trance-like states set in and break off, until a new, collective experience between emotion and reflection, of presence and duration becomes possible. And if you prefer, you could also simply hear and see a literally wonderful concert.

On view downstairs, under the repeated rhythms of *Sorrow*, Kjartansson's most recent series of paintings is on show. *Die Nacht der Hochzeit*, watercolours of dark starry skies, and *A Lot of Sorrow* are both comprised of ever varying repetitions of the same subject. Painting and drawing is an essential part of Kjartansson's practice, despite being best known for his large scale durational performances and video works. These include a twelve hour performance of the last aria of Mozart's *Wedding of Figaro* and a six month performance of doing a new painting every day of a young male model in a palazzo on the Canal Grande at the Venice Biennial. In his paintings and drawings Kjartansson employs the performative, often repeating the same subject en pleine air, luring out a soothing melancholia of longing and loss. Previous series include *Raging Pornographic Sea*, countless drawings of the sea he did with his father and *Reflections from Room 413*, five painted self portraits from 24 hours spent in a hotel room.

Ragnar Kjartansson (b. 1976) lives and works in Reykjavík. He has had solo exhibitions at institutions including the New Museum, New York, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Hangar Biococca, Milan, Frankfurter Kunstverein, and the BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna.

The National consists of vocalist Matt Berninger fronting two pairs of brothers: Aaron (guitar, bass, piano) and Bryce Dessner (guitar), and Scott (bass, guitar) and Bryan Devendorf (drums). Their first full-lengths *The National and Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers* preceded their signing to *Beggars Banquet* in 2004. *Alligator* (2005) raised their profile as The National grew into an incendiary live band. *Boxer* (2007) sold over three times as many copies as its predecessor and saw them transformed from underground stars into a rock institution. *High Violet* (2010) released on 4AD brought the band global critical and commercial success.

*A Lot of Sorrow* took place at MoMA PS1, as part of Sunday Sessions.

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