

Icelandic Art Center
ÍötæðimáttarstílnýM



La Biennale di Venezia

61. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Icelandic Pavilion presents *Pocket Universe* by Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia



Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir, *Hero Form*, 2026.
Photo Sandijs Ruluks. Courtesy of the artist ©Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir

Commissioner: Icelandic Art Center
Curators: Margrét Áskelsdóttir and Unnar Örn
Exhibitor: Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir
Venue: Docks Cantieri Cucchini, San Pietro di Castello, Venice, Italy
Dates: 9 May – 22 November 2026

The Icelandic Art Center will present *Pocket Universe*, a new multidisciplinary exhibition by artist, poet, composer and filmmaker Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir, representing Iceland at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition focuses on shifting perspectives through hope, imagination and belief, proposing that even in times of instability, a shift in mindset can open up new possibilities.

Ásta's practice can be described as a form of "spiritual fluxus", with a dream-like quality that blends different worlds and artistic disciplines. Working across sound, performance, moving image, sculpture and installation, she creates shifting experiences where it can be difficult to tell where one element begins and another ends. Rather than following a linear narrative, her work brings together different storylines and timelines, allowing layered worlds to appear and disappear. There is no fixed interpretation, only traces and clues that guide each viewer towards a personal, emotional understanding.

Presented at the Icelandic Pavilion's new location at Docks Cantieri Cucchini, a former shipyard between the Giardini and the Arsenale, *Pocket Universe* will unfold across interconnected indoor and outdoor spaces. Moving between the cosmic and the everyday, the exhibition will combine playful,

surreal elements with moments of contemplation, encouraging visitors to wander, linger and follow their own path. Conceived as an exhibition of encounter rather than spectacle, the work will take shape as a constellation of fragments that will evolve throughout the Biennale through live actions and performances. Objects will be charged and activated through the artist's presence, while gestures and actions will appear briefly, unexpectedly, and will return over time.

In *Pocket Universe*, Ásta proposes an invitation to a starting point, focusing on ideas of beginnings, the dismantling of existing systems, and how they might be reimagined. Myths, stories, journeys and adventures recur throughout the work. A boat appears, voices call out, and lights guide the way, evoking the promise of departure and a new destination.

At the heart of the presentation is a moving image work, depicting a character called "Creature Zero" setting out to find the "original rock", imagined as the first step in the creation of the earth. Filmed across sites associated with 'invisible' mystical energies, the work draws on stories and myths from different cultures, weaving together multiple elements into a shared, universal tale. What connects these narratives is the act of world-making and the role of faith and belief in shaping how people move forward.

Across the exhibition, Ásta reflects on how we trick ourselves into new ways of thinking. Themes of luck, chance and opportunity run throughout *Pocket Universe*, emerging through playful structures that resemble games, where returns to square one remain possible. Orbs, charms and talismans appear as small, charged objects, brought to life by the artist. Familiar rules are suggested, but outcomes remain unknown, allowing space for transformation through risk, play and the navigation of uncertainty.

Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir, artist says: *"We are at the threshold of different times. In moments like this, imagination and intuition have the capacity to orient us, to offer a sense of direction for where we might be heading. I believe small things can spark large actions. Sometimes all it takes is an idea, a touch of hope or faith, a vision. So much depends on perspective: whether we see the world as fixed, or as something that can be restructured. When reality feels locked or chaotic, it becomes difficult to imagine change, or even to recognise possibility. The exhibition explores these ideas through myths and tales, destiny and free will, shifts in perspective, and the visual language of luck and hope, while asking how we protect the fragility of the soft and the unknown as we thread a new fabric into our story. There is a gentle rebellion in choosing to be present, especially within a world that constantly pulls at your attention. I'm drawn to simple moments, to people gathering and creating a shared atmosphere, something collective. For me, imagination is not an escape, but a tool for shifting how we look at things, for seeing challenges as openings rather than dead ends."*

Margrét Áskelsdóttir, curator says *"I see the Pavilion as a reminder – a reminder of our inner power. Speaking through charms, myths and objects associated with intangible energy, the exhibition suggests that what we choose to believe in shapes what becomes possible. Rather than focusing on critique or fragmentation, Ásta offers a quieter, more hopeful mode of engagement, opening a space for interaction, contemplation and the imagining of alternative ways of thinking, and reminding us of the invisible threads – like the sky above – that connect us all."*

Iceland has participated in the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia since the 1960s and has presented its own national pavilion since 1984. Recent presentations include Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir's *That's a Very Large Number – A Commerzbau* (2024), Sigurður Guðjónsson's *Perceptual Motion* (2022) and Shoplifter's *Chromo sapiens* (2019). The Icelandic Pavilion is commissioned by the Icelandic Art Center, which promotes and supports Icelandic contemporary art internationally through grants, collaborations and projects. The National Gallery of Iceland is an official partner of the Icelandic Pavilion.

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Notes to Editors

Please find the press kit available from here: <https://egnyte.suttoncomms.com/fl/KqCbFHjCpq3Q>

Please refer to Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir by her full name or by Ásta in all published materials where possible. This preference should be respected in all coverage, including articles and interviews, subject to editorial guidelines.

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About Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir

Ásta studied at the Iceland University of the Arts and is a prolific poet with five published books. In recognition of her contributions to multidisciplinary art, she was nominated for the Bernard Heidsieck Prize by the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2021. Her work has been featured in exhibitions and performances at Reykjavík Art Museum, Ars Longa Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Casino Luxembourg, Nobel Prize Museum in Stockholm and Onassis in Athens.

About the Commissioner

Based in Reykjavík, the Icelandic Arts Center (IAC) is dedicated to promoting Icelandic visual arts internationally. Affiliated with Iceland's Ministry of Culture, Innovation and Higher Education, 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 International Art Exhibitions – La Biennale di Venezia on behalf of the Icelandic Ministry of Culture, Innovation and Higher Education and has been commissioner since 2007. More information is available on the Icelandic Art Center's [website](#).

About the Curators

Margrét Áskelsdóttir is a curator, art consultant, and art manager specialising in contemporary art. From 2015 to 2019 she was Director of BERG Contemporary in Reykjavík. She has curated and contributed to exhibitions in Iceland and internationally, including the solo presentation for Finnbogi Pétursson, the retrospective of Kees Visser at the National Gallery of Iceland, and group shows with artists such as A.K. Dolven, Ragnar Kjartansson and Jeppe Hein. She is President of the Association of Art Historians and Theorists in Iceland, advises on the Central Bank of Iceland's Art Collection, and has served on boards, juries, and advisory panels across the arts.

Unnar Örn is an artist and researcher engaged in art education, writing, and exhibition-making. Since the early 2000s, his preoccupations have centred on artist-run initiatives, outliers, and liminal practices within the context of visual art. He has exhibited his work widely across Europe and beyond and is actively engaged in numerous platforms addressing museum structures, institutional practices, and historicization.



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