

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on May 30, 2014

Ragnar Kjartansson: *The Visitors*

Ragnar Kjartansson: The Visitors

- Dates: May 30 – November 2, 2014
- Curator: Álvaro Rodríguez Fominaya
- Film & Video Gallery (103)

From May 30 to November 2, for the first time in Spain, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is proud to present *Ragnar Kjartansson: The Visitors*, the second show to open in the museum's new Film & Video Gallery dedicated to video art, video installation, and the moving image.

The Visitors (2012) is a multi-channel video installation with nine screens on which artist Ragnar Kjartansson (Reykjavik, Iceland, 1976) documents a musical performance staged at Rokeby Farm, a historic house in upstate New York's Hudson Valley, where Kjartansson has been a frequent visitor since he first discovered it in 2007. Thanks to the family members who still live there, Rokeby Farm has managed to maintain an air of bohemian, romantic disrepair that testifies to the long and eclectic history which inspired the artist.

To shoot this 64-minute piece, the Icelandic artist invited a group of his closest friends—renowned musicians from Reykjavik, including some with international reputations—to Rokeby to participate in a musical performance with him. Each of the nine channels in the installation features a participant playing the same melody on his/her instrument in a different part of the mansion. The sum of all of these single takes is what shapes and makes sense of the performance as a whole, which the artist describes as a “feminine nihilistic gospel song”.

The installation is, on the one hand, an analysis of the very notion of the performer, laying bare the extreme emotion of collective performance, and, on the other, a reflection on the persistence of emotional ties and the melancholy romanticism typical of the artist's Nordic culture. The title *The Visitors* is a nod to the last album released by Swedish pop band ABBA in 1981, when the group was under severe strain and in the process of breaking up. The lyrics of the song heard in the video, written by Kjartansson's ex-wife, and the music itself evoke a melancholy world in possible harmony.

Since its premiere in 2012 at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich, *The Visitors* has toured around the world, traveling to Malmö, New York, Vienna, Milan and Ohio.

Artist Bio

Ragnar Kjartansson was born in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1976. He studied at the Iceland Academy of the Arts in his home country and at the Royal Academy in Stockholm. Kjartansson draws on the entire arc of art in his performative practice. The history of film, music, theatre, visual culture and literature finds its way into his video installations, durational performances, drawing and painting.

Pretending and staging become key tools in the artist's attempt to convey sincere emotion and offer a genuine experience to the audience.

His work has been exhibited at museums and institutions around the world, including the Arthouse at the Jones Center in Austin (2011), the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (2012), and La Fondazione Hangar Bicocca in Milan (2013). The Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Vienna (2013 and 2014) and the New Museum in New York (2014) have also recently hosted solo shows dedicated to this artist.

In 2009 Kjartansson represented Iceland at the Venice Biennale, and in 2011 he received the Malcolm McLaren Award at Performa 13 in New York.

Film & Video (Gallery 103)

The museum's Film & Video Gallery, which opened to the public on May 6 of this year with the piece by *Christian Marclay* entitled *The Clock*, has been specifically designed for an exhibition program dedicated to video art, video installation, and the moving image, showcasing works from the Guggenheim Museums and other international collections. This fall, the gallery will welcome *The Krazyhouse (Megan, Simon, Nicky, Philip, Dee), Liverpool, UK (2009)*, a work by artist Rineke Dijkstra.

Conversation with Ragnar Kjartansson (Tuesday, June 3)

Artist Ragnar Kjartansson will talk to exhibition curator, Álvaro Rodríguez Fominaya, about his creative process and his work *The Visitors* on view in the Museum's Film & Video gallery until September 7.

Museum Auditorium, 6:30 pm

Free; tickets available from the Museum ticket office and website

Cover image:

Ragnar Kjartansson

Video still from *The Visitors*, 2012

Photo: Elísabet Davids

Nine-channel HD video projection

Run time: 64 minutes

Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, and the i8 Gallery, Reykjavik

For further information:

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Press Images for
Ragnar Kjartansson: The Visitors
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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At the press area (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en) you can register and download high resolution images and videos featuring the exhibitions and the building. Sign in to get access. If you are already a user, log in here (you need your username and password).

For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.es

1. Portrait of the artist
Photo: Nielsen Omvik



2. Portrait of the artist
Photo: Karl Lilliendahl



3. *The Visitors*, 2012
Nine channel HD video projection
Duration: 64 minutes
© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.
Photo: Elísabet Davids



4. *The Visitors*, 2012
Nine channel HD video projection
Duration: 64 minutes
© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist, Luhring
Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.
Photo: Elísabet Davids



5. *The Visitors*, 2012
Nine channel HD video projection
Duration: 64 minutes
© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.
Photo: Elísabet Davids



6. *The Visitors*, 2012

Nine channel HD video projection

Duration: 64 minutes

© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.

Photo: Elísabet Davids



7. *The Visitors*, 2012

Nine channel HD video projection

Duration: 64 minutes

© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist, Luhring
Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.

Photo: Elísabet Davids



8. *The Visitors*, 2012

Nine channel HD video projection

Duration: 64 minutes

© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery,
Reykjavik.

Photo: Elísabet Davids



9. *The Visitors*, 2012

Nine channel HD video projection

Duration: 64 minutes

© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.

Photo: Elísabet Davids



10. *The Visitors*, 2012

Nine channel HD video projection

Duration: 64 minutes

© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist, Luhring
Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.

Photo: Elísabet Davids



11. *The Visitors*, 2012

Nine channel HD video projection

Duration: 64 minutes

© Ragnar Kjartansson. Courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.

Photo: Elísabet Davids

