

**Hreinn
Friðfinnsson**

***To Catch a Fish with
a Song: 1964–Today***

24/5–25/8/2019

**Opening
23/5/2019, 6–9 pm**

**Curated by
Andrea Bellini
and Krist Gruijthuijsen**



Hreinn Friðfinnsson, *Sanctuary*, 1997, cardboard box, fluorescent paper.
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nordenhake Berlin / Stockholm.

**Centre
d'Art
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The Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève is happy to present the first institutional solo exhibition in Switzerland of Icelandic artist Hreinn Friðfinnsson. With more than seventy works, *To Catch a Fish with a Song: 1964–Today* celebrates this understated but major artist, looking back on more than half a century of his inventive practice.

Hreinn Friðfinnsson's work is recognized for both its lyricism and its stark poetry, which transcends the often-commonplace subjects and materials he uses to create his pieces. He has been compared to artists working in romantic conceptual modes. His practice is grounded in the dematerialization of art and has – at the same time – strong links to landscape and natural phenomena. Nevertheless, the Icelandic artist has remained resolutely independent. Friðfinnsson's work does not incorporate a critical stance toward art, and the artist eschews strict protocols for the interpretation of his works; for him, art-making has something compulsive to it.

Friðfinnsson is a kind of idiosyncratic alchemist. With subtle gestures, he uses the exhibition space as a stage upon which to transform time, space (including the space of the imagination), objects, the rational, and the irrational into captivating yet humble miracles.

Although there is a consistency of theme and a common emotional thread running through Friðfinnsson's art production, the resulting works are remarkably varied in scale and substance. They include photographs, videos, drawings, tracings as well as installations, texts, and ready-mades. Throughout the profusion of media and subjects he addresses, Friðfinnsson's practice maintains a unique character; his economy of means goes hand in hand with a poetic, elusive, and at times humorous language.

The exhibition will be accompanied by the first comprehensive monograph on the artist (Koenig Books, 2019, English). This richly illustrated volume, edited by Andrea Bellini and Krist Gruijthuijsen, includes an interview conducted by the editors, new essays by Ivana Bago, Luca Cerizza, and Cassandra Edlefsen Lasch, and a complete chronology compiled by Sara De Chiara.

Born in 1943 in Baer Dölum, Iceland, Hreinn Friðfinnsson has lived in Amsterdam since 1971. He has had solo exhibitions at Bergen Kunstmuseum and Malmö Konsthall (2008), the Reykjavik Art Museum, Hafnarhús (2007), and the Serpentine Gallery, London (2007). In 1993 he exhibited at the National Gallery of Iceland in Reykjavik, the same year he represented Iceland at the Venice Biennale. In 2012 he participated in the São Paulo Biennial.

This exhibition is organized in partnership with KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, where it will be on view between September 28, 2019 and January 5, 2020.

The exhibition

2nd floor

Hreinn Friðfinnsson was born and raised in an isolated region of Iceland. The island landscape – alternately rugged and gentle, scabrous and vaporous, concrete and subtly dreamlike – looms large in much of his work, most conspicuously in the prevalence of nature in his iconography.

Friðfinnsson creates stories that are steeped in Icelandic sagas. Narrative constructs have informed his visual idiom since its origins in the 1960s. In line with certain conceptual artists, Friðfinnsson makes use of text both to categorize and to describe the intangible, the mysterious and the unclassifiable. A number of the works and videos presented on this floor show a connection to science and the concept of infinity. Using extraterrestrial (meteorites) and paleontological (fossils) materials and drawing on physical and scientific phenomena (movement, golden ratio), the artist seeks to explore the fundamental properties of our universe with the eye of a layman and the tools of an artist.

3rd floor

Hreinn Friðfinnsson left Iceland in 1966, frequented European avant-garde movements and settled in Amsterdam in 1971, where he has lived ever since. His work covers a wide range of subjects and takes many forms, including photography, drawing, ready-mades, installation, texts and, lately, video. Despite the diversity of his media, a number of themes recur in Friðfinnsson's practice. For example, his works often involve dualities and reversals: left and right, past and present, near and far, inside and outside, empty and full, light and shade, visible and invisible, dreams and reality.

His art is profoundly influenced by Iceland and various figures in art history, which are incorporated into his works as a sort of mystical material. Although rooted in the artistic scene of his day and age, Friðfinnsson has developed a very personal, delicate style that is conceptual in approach but marked by lyricism, modest in form but rich in meaning, seeking to reveal the hidden poetry and mysterious epiphanies of our daily lives.

Download the high-resolution images at
<http://bit.ly/Fridfinnsson>

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