

STEYPA

Contemporary Art in Iceland

A Documentary featuring : Ásmundur Ásmundsson, Gabriela Friðriksdóttir, The Icelandic Love Corporation,
Huginn Þór Arason, Katrín Sigurðardóttir, Margrét H. Blöndal, Unnar Örn Jónasson Auðarson
Directors : Markús Þór Andrésson & Ragnheiður Gestsdóttir Produced by : LoFi Productions
Music : Ólafur Björn Ólafsson Graphics : Brynhildur Pálsdóttir, Guðfinna Mjöll Magnúsdóttir,
Sighvatur Ómar Kristinsson Length : 67 min Language: Icelandic w. English subtitles
Distributor: lofi@this.is www.myspace.com/steypadocumentary

STEYPA

STEYPA epk

Synopsis

Credits

Biography

Filmography

Press

Stills

Production notes



info: Markus and Ragnheidur
lofi@this.is

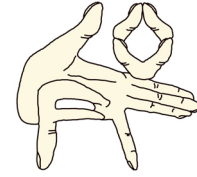
Synopsis

Emerging artists working in their hometown Reykjavík and abroad share with the viewers the diverse processes that spark a work of art. Threading a line between realism and performance, the film explores inspiration and creativity through an intimate two-year collaboration with seven artists, providing an insight into a booming scene. Pouring Coke into empty Fanta bottles, Ásmundur asks himself “What is art?” suggesting that it is embedded in what an artist does. Accordingly, rather than focusing on the end product, the film deals with what the artist is up to before it comes to that. Gabriela kneads dough and smears on her face, Margrét is enchanted by gaskets in a rubber store, Huginn has his hair cut off and turned into a wig, Unnar rummages for plant cuttings in a home for the elderly, The Icelandic Love Corporation recreates Van Gogh’s Starry Night in liquorice and Kartín builds a small model of a house only to throw it off a bigger one. What is behind this commotion? Has Iceland anything to do with it? Does it concern the rest of us?

The title, STEYPA, is borrowed from the artworks by one of the seven participating artists. It literally means “concrete” and is Ásmundur’s favorite sculpture material but it is also a word used in Icelandic for weird stuff or jargon. The composer and rock musician Ólafur Björn Ólafsson creates the soundtrack and three young and prominent designers create the graphics. The artists and creative team are all born between 1967 and 1976, situated in Reykjavík, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, London, New York and Atlanta. Other interviewees, involved in or familiar with the Icelandic art scene are among others the curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Gregory Volk, the musician Bjork, and the artist Roni Horn. Together with friends and relatives of the artists they frame the phenomena of Icelandic contemporary art within the international scene and raise questions that apply generally to lives dedicated to creativity.

Credits and info

Title	STEYPA
Directors	Markús Thór Andrésson Ragnheidur Gestsdóttir
Production company	LoFi Productions
Length	67 min
Language	Icelandic w. English subtitles
Artists	Ásmundur Ásmundsson Gabríela Fríðriksdóttir The Icelandic Love Corporation Huginn Thór Arason Katrín Sigurdardóttir Margrét H. Blöndal Unnar Örn Jónasson Audarson
Music	Ólafur Björn Ólafsson
Graphics	Brynhildur Pálsdóttir Gudfinna Mjöll Magnúsdóttir Sighvatur Ómar Kristinsson
Premiere	Reykjavik International Film Festival, Oct '07
Television	Scheduled in spring '08 in RUV, Icelandic National Broadcasting Service

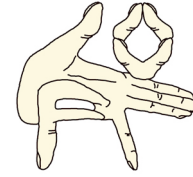


Biography:

LoFi Productions was established by Ragnheiður Gestsdóttir and Markús Þór Andr sson in 2003. They have worked closely together for over 5 years co-producing and co-directing short programs and feature length documentaries. LoFi Productions has made several short programs on art and culture for a culture show (M saik) on the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (R UV), a TV documentary about the Reykjav k Art Festival 2005 and a documentary about the artist Gabr ela Fr driksd ttir who represented Iceland at the Venice Biennale in 2005. It has furthermore co-produced two documentaries on Bj rk together with One Little Indian in the UK. LoFi Productions has two documentaries in production at this moment: Vikings in the Wild West, a film about Americans of Nordic heritage and a creative documentary about Icelandic conceptual artist Hreinn Fri finnsson, whose recent exhibition in the Serpentine Gallery attracted more visitors than any other before.

Ragnheidur Gestsd ttir (b. 1975) graduated with an MA in Visual Anthropology from Goldsmiths College in 2001. She has produced programs about art and culture for television in Iceland and London based DVD magazine Specialten. She has made some documentaries about different visual artists and musicians, including 3 films about Icelandic singer Bj rk whom she's worked with closely over the last few years. She is co-editor and founder of Icelandic DVD magazine Rafskinna and is currently working on a film about Icelandic artist Hreinn Fr dfinnsson and a feature length documentary Vikings in the Wild West, a road movie about the fake and the authentic amongst people of Nordic heritage in the US, co-produced by Radiator Film in Denmark. She lives and works in New York City.

Mark s Þ r Andr sson (b. 1975) graduated with an MA in Curatorial Studies from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in 2007. He graduated as a studio artist from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2001 and has been working as an artist, writer and curator since. He has worked intermittently for radio and television and been part of the creative team behind several art related documentaries. He is currently writing for different catalogues and magazines, running an experimental exhibition space and working with Icelandic and international museums and galleries. He lives and works in Berlin.



Filmography

- 2008- **Hreinn Fridfinnsson** (appr. 60 min)
 Documentary on the Icelandic conceptual artist living in the Netherlands. Work in progress, to be premiered in 2009
- 2008- **Vikings in the Wild West** (appr. 90 min)
 A documentary about people of Nordic heritage in the US focusing on invented traditions and the staging of identity. A co production between Icelandic LoFi Productions and Danish Radiator Film
 Work in progress
- 2007 **STEYPA** (67 min)
 A documentary about Icelandic contemporary art
- 2006 **Versations Tetralogia:**
Gabriela Fridriksdottir at the Venice Biennale (25 min)
 A documentary about Gabriela at the Biennale, the making of her piece and the ideas behind it
 Made for RUV, Icelandic National Broadcasting Service and shown in March 2006
- 2005 **Reykjavik Art Festival** (25 min)
 A documentary on the exhibition "Work Time, Material Time, Life Time" curated by Jessica Morgan
 Made for RUV, Icelandic National Broadcasting Service and shown in May 2005
- 2004 **Triumph of a Heart** – the stories behind the music video (30 min)
 A mocumentary about the making of a Bjork music video made by Spike Jonze. Shown at several film festivals, including Silverdocs and on MTV. Released on DVD in june 2005
- 2004 **The inner or deep part of an animal or plant structure** (50 min)
 A documentary about the making of Bjork's album Medulla
 Shown at several film festivals, on TV in various countries and was released on DVD worldwide in Augsut 2004 and re-released by Universal in June 2005
- 2002 **Minuscule** (75 min) and **Touring Vespertine** (40 min)
 Two documentaries about Bjork touring opera houses around the world in 2003.
 Released on DVD in November 2002 and September 2003
- 2001 **Niceland?** (20 min)
 A documentary about Icelandic nationalism
 Graduation film from Goldsmiths College

Ádeila háðfuglsins - RIFF: 2007: Tjarnarbíó, Regnboginn, Háskólabíó

Steypa ***

Leikstjóri: Markús Þór Andrésson og Ragnheiður Gestsdóttir. 67 mín. Ísland. 2007.

Það er augljóst frá upphafi að viðfangsefnið er nútímalist í þessari nýju heimildarkvikmynd því fjótlega er spurt, hvað er list? Já, list, en hvers vegna nútímalist? Jú, listamaðurinn sem verður fyrir svörum er ekki í klassískum stellingum heldur að hella kóki í Fantaflöskur! Svárið reynist líka jafn fjölbreytt og listamennirnir sem fylgst er með. Þeir eru: Ásmundur Ásmundsson, Katrín Sigurðardóttir, Huginn Þór Arason, Unnar Örn Auðarson Jónasson, Margrét Blöndal, Gabriela Friðriksdóttir og Gjörningaklúbburinn.

Í myndinni fá áhorfendur ekki eingöngu innsýn í störf þeirra og hugmyndafræði heldur er staða listamannsins sett í viðara samhengi. Þá ekki einvörðungu staða listamannsins í íslensku samfélagi, heldur einnig staða íslenskra listamanna á alþjóðavettvangi. Það er t.d. rýnt í spurninguna hvort hægt er að brjóta út úr ofuráherslunni sem lögð er á náttúruna þegar verk íslenskra listamanna eru túlkuð. Er ef til vill allt alltof fast í tröllum, víkingum, álfum, jöklum og eldgosum, eða er eitthvað nýtt að gerast?

Steypa reynir að taka púlsinn á listasenumni og tekst bara ágætlega upp. Stíllinn að fylgja fólki eftir á borgarhoppi og milli ára er nokkuð sem íslenskir heimildargerðarmenn mættu gera meira af. Ekki bara fyrir flippið, heldur til að vinna almennilegar frásagnir með dýpt eins og sýndar hafa verið hér á hátíðinni. En þó farið sé víða í Steypu þá tekst myndinni ekki að komast mjög langt undir yfirborðið.

Anna Sveinbjarnardóttir

Sýnd í Regnboganum 7. október.



Steypa Gjörningaklúbburinn er meðal listamanna í Steypu.

The Mockingbird's Critique**Steypa*****

Review by Anna Sveinbjarnardottir, Mordunbladid, Oct 7, 2007

From the start it is obvious that contemporary art is the topic of this new documentary because early on someone asks the question, what is art? Behold, pouring Coke into Fanta-bottles the artist who answers is far from the traditional setup! The answer turns out to be as diverse as the artists that are under consideration. They are: Asmundur Asmundsson, Katrin Sigurdardottir, Huginn Thor Arason, Unnar Orn Jonasson, Margret Blondal, Gabriela Fridriksdottir and The Icelandic Love Corporation. Throughout the film the audience not only gets an insight into their work and ideology but the general status of the artist is reflected in a wider context. Furthermore not just the artist's place in Icelandic community but the position of Icelandic artists within the international scene. As an example there is an analysis of the question if it is possible to break out of the extreme emphasis on nature when the work of Icelandic artists is interpreted. Is everything perhaps much too stuck in trolls, Vikings, elves, glaciers and volcanic eruptions, or is there something new happening? *Steypa* attempts to examine the art scene and does a good job. Following people between cities over a period of years is something that Icelandic documentary filmmakers might do more. Not only for the sake of fun, but to create profound narratives as have been shown in this film festival. Though *Steypa* covers a wide field, the film does not reach very far under the surface.

Stills



Captions from the top left: K. Sigurdardottir in search for a stone for her sculpture; detail of a painting by G. Fridriksdottir; A. Asmundsson stacks cans planning a major sculpture; G. Fridriksdottir covered in dough; U. Jonasson's plants; the Icelandic Love Corporation in their studio; H. Arason interviewed by a panda bear; U. Jonasson attends to his plants in his studio; and M. Blondal with her art school students.

Production Notes

As the result of a close collaboration with the seven artists, the documentary **STEYPA** reveals a combination of both fiction and real events, in a playful and experimental way. It explores their creativity, inspirations, and expression through performance, art, music and documentation. Captivating energy connects these totally different artists, along with questions of identity, life style and attitude characterizing the Icelandic scene. As they face the international art world they are confronted with the same obstruction that Icelandic artists rebelled against in the sixties in their own country: the inevitable stereotype of Iceland, its landscape, nature and inhabitants. How do they make people see beyond that and focus on what they are really doing?

The film is shot in eight cities in Europe and in the USA, together with Reykjavik. The directors are Icelandic, an artist/curator and a visual anthropologist/filmmaker. In Reykjavik in the '00s you find a melting pot of international influence and local eccentricities. Geographic isolation, financial frustration, art historical immaturity, creative megalomania, artistic incest, social compactness, melancholia, intimacy and endless optimism; all this has charged Icelandic artists with an irrepressible force. The seven artists in **STEYPA** are dynamic and somewhat eccentric characters. The directors adapt individually to each of them and focus on the underlying nature and attitude of their body of work, not mediums or schools they reflect. As alternative to traditional ideas of art as consumption, the film's approach is not to treat the work of art *as object*, but to consider art *as practice*. Fundamental is the artists' performance and personal accounts, systematically constructed through interviews and statements in different settings, domestic and public. Each of the seven artists is represented on his or her basis, reflecting their art and qualities, supporting the documentary as a whole and not a compilation of seven parts.

Huginn Arason is occupied with two things; animals and himself. He obsessively collects images of animals to create collages and he works on duplicating his exterior, his clothes and hair. In the role of a Panda Bear he shares with us his nostalgia for childhood.

Asmundur Asmundsson combines shyness and megalomania in outrageous sculptures, installations and performances. He is trying to learn German to welcome guests to his exhibition in Berlin but is almost too stressed to accomplish his task. A strong believer in the *mélange* of art and life,

Unnar O. A. Jonasson drives around town gathering material to share with his audience. He takes advantage of his green fingers growing plants and displaying them in galleries.

Margret H. Blondal compares her art with acupuncture; her objects, images and texts stimulate the viewer in different ways. Her inspiration comes in part from the children she teaches and lyrics she cannot get of her mind.

Gabriela Fridriksdottir prepares her most ambitious project, for the Venice Biennial, an installation in the spirit of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*; videos, music, sculptures and paintings. She plunges into history, mythology and herself for inspiration.

The Icelandic Love Corporation celebrates their ten years as artists collective, working together on performances loaded with allegory and elegance. They manipulate traditional craft, Icelandic nature and clichés.

What is a place and how do I relate to it? **Katrin Sigurdardottir** explores memory, distance in time and space and the aura of places in her sculptures and installations. From the roof of her Brooklyn studio she throws a model of a house never built in Reykjavik.