



PHOTO: PETER COX

HREINN FRÍÐFINNSSON, *BY THE WATERFALL*, 2019–2022
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Hreinn Fridfinnsson is one of Iceland's leading artists. Often celebrated for its lyricism and stark poetry, his work which encompasses drawing, photography and installation, appropriates commonplace subjects and materials in order to highlight invisible yet potent spaces of communication and the flexible nature of human memory.

While landscape and the natural world are ongoing touchstones for Fridfinnsson, he is noted for his diverse and curious approach to subject matter, with works that are embedded with a common sensibility and lightness of touch.

As Olafur Eliasson says, 'He gives the subtleties of life a language'. It was Olafur Eliasson, co-designer of the 2007 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, who initiated the exhibition of Fridfinnsson that took place at the Gallery that same year. As the first presentation of the artist's work in the UK, the exhibition brought together a wide breadth of works from a career spanning four decades. I have been fortunate to have had an extended dialogue with Hreinn since the early 1980s. One of my first encounters with his work was his legendary piece from 1974 about secrets, a piece that has since influenced countless contemporary artists.

Text by Hans Ulrich Obrist

BY THE WATERFALL

Stromatolite, *Collenia undosa*, on stainless steel mirror, one of the earliest life forms on earth, between 2.2 and 2.4 billion years old which provided a considerable amount of oxygen to the atmosphere. The crystal balls relating to both optics and myths. The photograph taken ca. 1940 by Björn M. Arnórsson.

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BIOGRAPHY HREINN FRIDFINNSSON

Hreinn Friðfinnsson's conceptual work has been characterized as poetic and playful, dealing often with storytelling, nature and time. It can be almost anything: a photograph, a story, a tracing, an atmosphere, a quasi-scientific experiment, a paint stirring stick or a secret. A split second up in the air between the years 1975 and 1976, one shoe searching for the other one to form a pair. His works are often structured around dualities and reversals. Both in form and content they are hard to pin down. The works remain in a state of flux even after their conception, often older works are reused or expanded upon.

Born in 1943 in Baer Dölum, Iceland, Hreinn Friðfinnsson has been living in Amsterdam since 1971. He has exhibited internationally since the 1970s and had solo exhibitions at respected institutions such as the National Gallery (Reykjavík), the Serpentine Gallery (London) and Bergen Konsthall (Norway). 1993 Friðfinnsson represented Iceland at the 45th Venice Biennale, participated in 30th São Paulo Biennial 2012 and Münster Skulptur Projekte 2017. In 2019-2020 a major retrospective To Catch a Fish with a Song: 1964–Today took place at KW Institute of Contemporary Art in Berlin and Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva. Amsterdam based venues such as Gallery 845 (1970's), Galerie van Gelder (1990's), Kunstverein (2015) and EENWERK (2018) have hosted solo shows.