



**ODON  
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CONTEMPORARY

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INNER LIGHT  
Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir





Steinunn's figures do not need any introduction. Their noble, simplified faces invite the viewer to see well past the fleeting outer appearances of the human being and they themselves 'introduce' the viewer deep into the mystical spheres of inner spirituality.

Odon Wagner



STEINUNN THÓRARINSDÓTTIR :



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September 22 - October 14, 2006

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## INNER LIGHT: AN EXHIBITION OF NEW SCULPTURES BY STEINUNN THÓRARINSDÓTTIR

In the national mythos of Canada, the “Idea of North” has long been associated with mysticism, solitude and transfiguration. It is woven into the fibre of our cultural heritage through the works of Al Purdy, Herman Voaden, Northrop Frye and so many others. The northern spirit is sometimes a deliberate construction put forth to unify our sense of unique identity and assert our separateness. The inherent metaphor of the North as Other, aligns it closely with spirituality, psychology and the sublime. It was a group of Scandinavian paintings in a 1913 Buffalo, NY exhibition, which inspired Lawren Harris and J.E.H. Macdonald to aim at capturing the experience of what Macdonald called “the mythic north”.

This exhibition by Icelander Steinunn Thórarinsdóttir, presents us with a group of sculptures that are varied in size, material, and construction. Despite this variation, Steinunn’s oeuvre has a remarkable cohesiveness, demonstrating the deliberateness of her aesthetic decisions, all of which service the interconnectedness of her individual works. The sculptures reflect a northern sensibility, and approach themes of spirituality, introspection and physicality in new and surprising ways. Thórarinsdóttir uses representations of the figure to evoke a sense of the sublime that is tied to both our sense of being in the world and our sense of identity within.

“Position II” is a small aluminum sculpture where one figure stands upon another, and both are reflected back in the mirrored steel, which serves as a base. One cannot help but think of Brancusi’s “Endless Column” where repeating rhombus forms ascend to suggest infinity. The representation of figures in Steinunn’s sculpture, juxtaposes the suggestion of eternity with something finite and real. The body is the territory of human experience. What is common to everyone regardless of age, gender, or race, is the fact that we all have a body. It’s a form we all share and each of us has a unique experience with one. In Steinunn’s work, the representation of the body ensures us that we ourselves, have an integral part to play in the sublime.

“Dawn” is a life cast, made from a mold taken off a living subject. Because the life cast is essentially a shell, the surface or outer layer of the sculpture is paramount. Steinunn does not build up an anatomical body where the exterior is an expression of the underlying forms. The technique of life casting emphasizes surfaces in order to create a visual effect associated with skin, boundaries and delineation between inner and outer space. The dichotomy of inner and outer space recurs in all of Steinunn’s work, whether cast from life or hand modeled. The narratives unfolding within her figures are mysterious. Instead of revealing an individual psychology or human drama, Steinunn offers up an archetype, in which the figure stands in for a broader whole. Even when they are made from imprints of an actual person, the artist transforms the model into an emblem for humankind.

There is a strong relationship between the artist's method and her message. She makes use of a process called sand-casting, which is ideally suited to images without fine detail. The process allows her to repeat the same image in different materials, each of which has symbolic significance. For example, "Gate" is cast in iron with glass, while "Morning II" depicts the same figure cast in bronze. The change of material and context imbues the two pieces with different sensibilities and meanings. "Places", features two figures cast from the same mold, one in aluminum and the other in iron. For Steininn, aluminum represents the sky, while cast iron represents the earth. By casting the twin sculptures in different materials, she asserts the individuality of each figure, while maintaining a symmetrical visual harmony. There is a striking contrast between the rusty patina of the iron, which evolves and changes throughout the sculpture's life, and the reflective brilliance of the aluminum. In this way, the artist takes full advantage of the potential for multiplicity that is unique to the sculptural casting process.

As important to Steinunn's work as the objects themselves, are the spaces that they occupy. The artist consciously activates the space and uses it to define the way we engage with the sculptures. Essentially, the artist has two distinct ways of utilizing these spatial qualities. In the life-sized works, one cannot help but be aware of the fact that the sculpture occupies the same space as the viewer. When she changes the scale in works such as "Vision" or "Position", the viewer is afforded a contemplative distance. In a sense, this sculptural convention parallels the use of perspective in painting, where the viewer is given a privileged vantage point in the case of a low horizon, as compared with the humanist tradition of equating the viewer's own eye to the vanishing point. These are ways in which the artist determines the situation, and defines the way we perceive the artwork in relation to ourselves.

Thórarinsdóttir's sculptures invite us to walk amongst them, as both active participants and reflective observers. Their quiet mysticism has the power to move us, while their raw physicality has the ability to inspire awe. Like Iceland itself, the sculptures have a rugged beauty, and possess the strength of an authentic northern spirit. They are both resonant of their surroundings and deeply introspective. It is a kind of inward searching that her sculptures invite the viewer to partake in. Glenn Gould suggested that we go north not to inflict change upon the unknown, but to emerge from the experience ourselves changed.

Laura Peturson  
July 2006







1

Being There  
Cast Iron, height 53 in. / 135 cm



2

Dawn  
Cast Iron and Glass, height 70 in. / 178 cm



3

Momentum  
Aluminum, 14 x 20 x 46 in. / 36 x 51 x 117 cm



4

Position I  
Aluminum, height 16 x 12 x 8 in. / 40 x 30 x 20 cm, edition of 7



5

Place

Aluminum, height 54 x 12 x 12 in. / 137 x 30 x 30 cm, edition of 7



6

Situation I  
Cast Iron and Glass, height 15 in. / 38 cm, edition of 7



7

Vision II  
Cast Iron and Glass, 16 x 16 x 20 in. / 40 x 40 x 51 cm, edition of 7



8

Morning II  
Bronze, 15 x 7 x 9 in. / 38 x 18 x 23 cm, edition of 7



9

Morning I  
Bronze, 11 x 4 x 12 in. / 28 x 10 x 30 cm, edition of 7





10

Situation II  
Aluminum and Mirror Steel, height 16 in. / 40 cm, edition of 7



11

Vision I  
Aluminum and Mirror Steel, height 16 in. / 40 cm, edition of 7



12

Poem  
Cast Iron and Glass, 14 x 39 in. / 36 x 99 cm



13

Balance  
Cast Iron, 28 x 43 in. / 71 x 109 cm



14

Fragment  
Cast Iron, 10 x 6 x 4 in. / 26 x 15 x 10 cm



15

Earth  
Cast Iron, height 26 in. / 66 cm



16

Position II  
Aluminum and Mirror Steel, height 32 in. / 81 cm, edition of 7



17

Gate  
Cast Iron and Glass, height 15 in. / 38 cm, edition of 7



18

Connection  
Cast Iron, 39 x 158 in. / 99 x 400 cm



## COMMISSIONS

The following pages represent a selection of commissioned works installed around the world. Steinunn has created monuments, memorials and site-specific works for public spaces and private homes. To commission an original sculpture, please contact the gallery for details.

Shadows  
Aluminum, height 71 in. / 180 cm  
Reykjavik, Iceland



Places  
Cast iron and aluminum, height 71 in. / 180 cm  
Copenhagen, Denmark



This two-part sculpture symbolizes the connection between England and Iceland.

Voyage  
Bronze and basalt stone, height 228 in. / 580 cm  
Kingston upon Hull, England



Voyage  
Aluminum and basalt stone, height 228 in. / 580 cm  
Vík, Iceland



Islands  
Aluminum, height 70 in. / 178 cm  
Sydney, Australia



Illumination  
Cast iron and glass, height 69 in. / 175 cm  
Surrey, England



BIOGRAPHY





## EDUCATION

1974-75	Portsmouth College of Art & Design, Portsmouth, England
1976-79	Portsmouth Polytechnic, BA in Fine Arts, Portsmouth, England
1979-80	Accademia di Belle Arti, Bologna, Italy

## PRIVATE EXHIBITIONS

1979	Gallery Suðurgata 7 Reykjavik
1982	Kjarvalsstaðir, Reykjavik
1982	Egilsbúð, Neskaupstað
1984	Listmunahúsið, Reykjavik
1987	Kjarvalsstaðir, Reykjavik
1990	Kjarvalsstaðir, Reykjavik
1992	Listmunahúsið, Reykjavik
1993	Slunkaríki, Ísafirði
1996	Kópavogur Art Museum, Kópavogur
1997	Akureyri Art Museum, Akureyri
1998	Galleri Krebsen, Copenhagen, Denmark
1998	Barbacka Konsthallen. Kristianstad, Sweden
1999	Ásmundarsalur, Reykjavik
2000	Ásmundarsafn Museum, Reykjavik
2000	Frauen Museum, Bonn Germany
2000	The Nordic Council of Ministers Gallery, Copenhagen Denmark
2001	Galleria Bedoli, Viadana, Italy
2001	Gallery Saevar Karl, Reykjavik
2002	Open House studio exhibition, Reykjavik
2003	The Goethe Institut, Toronto, Canada
2004	Hallgrímskirkja Summer Show in Reykjavik
2005	The Lab Gallery, New York, USA
2006	101 Gallery, Reykjavik
2006	Galerie Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark
2006	Odon Wagner Contemporary, Toronto, Canada

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1979	Galleria Zona, Florence, Italy
1980	Sculptors' Association, Reykjavik Arts Festival
1980	Bodies of Artists, Nord Jyllands Kunstmuseum, Denmark
1981	Target-Earth, The Art of Survival, Los Angeles, USA
1982	Association of Icelandic Artists, Akureyri
1983	UM '83, Kjarvalsstaðir
1984	14 artists, Centenary of the National Gallery of Iceland
1985	Glass Fragments, Kjarvalsstaðir
1987	Scandinavia Today, Kyoto & Tokyo, Japan
1988	Scandinavia Today, New York, Cleveland & Alabama, USA
1988	5 Dimensions, 5 Icelandic Artists, Röhsska Museum, Gothenburg, Sweden, The Nordic House in Faroe Islands
1988	Human Being in the Foreground, Kjarvalsstaðir
1989	12 Artists, Hafnarborg
1991	Religious Art, Ásmundarsalur
1991	Art Festival of Hafnarfjörður
1992	Modern Sculpture, Kringlan, Reykjavik Arts Festival
1992	National Arts Fund, Ásmundarsalur
1992	Salon International de la Sculpture Contemporaine, Paris & Noisy-le-Grand, France
1993	Zeit-Sichten, 6 women artists from Reykjavik, Frauen Museum, Bonn, Germany
1993	777, Distance Communication Network, Exhibition in 7 cities: Reykjavik, Aarhus, Amsterdam, Portsmouth, Duisburg, Bratislava & Moscow
1994	Sculpture, sculpture, sculpture. Kjarvalsstaðir. Art Festival
1994	Bankside Gallery, London, England

1995 Eventa 2. International exhibition in Ekeby Qvarn Konstsalong, Uppsala, Sweden  
 1996 New Purchases, Kjarvalsstaðir  
 1997 Biennale Contemporanea, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy  
 1997 New Creations. Ideas for new churches. The Religious Art Festival  
 1997 Unique Glass, Kalmar, Sweden  
 1997 Suðurgata 7, The Living Art Museum  
 1997 Icelandic Art, Kjarvalsstaðir  
 1997 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sculptors' Association  
 1998 The Coastline, Outdoor exhibition, Reykjavik Arts Festival  
 1998 Wolfryd & Selway Fine Arts, Los Angeles, USA  
 1999 The Coastline, Reykjavik  
 1999 Scandinavian Center, Lutheran University, USA  
 1999 Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, Sydney, Australia  
 2000 Cologne Art Fair with the Frauen Museum  
 2000 Berkeley Square Gallery, London, England  
 2001 Palm Beach Art Fair with the Berkeley Square Gallery, USA  
 2001 Asago Exhibition of models, Japan  
 2001 Tajima Art Exhibition, Japan  
 2001 Sculpture by the Sea, Tasman Peninsula  
 2001 Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi, Sydney, Australia  
 2002 Purchases, The City Museum of Reykjavik  
 2002 Sculpture from the Sea, Campelltown City Gallery, Sydney, Australia  
 2002 Sculpture from the Sea, Waverley Council Gallery, Sydney, Australia  
 2002-2003 Icelandic Art 1980-2000, National Gallery of Iceland  
 2003 Haltestelle! Kunst, Nurnberg, Germany  
 2003 This I would like to see! Gerduberg Cultural Centre, Reykjavik  
 2003 Toronto International Art Fair, Odon Wagner Gallery, Toronto, Canada  
 2003 "Kolonialen", Opening exhibition of The North Atlantic Bridge in Copenhagen  
 2003 "Buckle up" Travelling exhibition, The Reykjavik Art Museum  
 2004 Art Miami with Odon Wagner Gallery, Miami, USA  
 2004 Art Copenhagen with Gallerie Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark  
 2004 Toronto International Art Fair, Odon Wagner Gallery, Toronto, Canada  
 2004 Art Paris with Galerie Egelund, Paris, France  
 2004 Sculpture by the Sea, Sydney, Australia  
 2005 Art Miami, Odon Wagner Gallery, Miami, Florida  
 2005 Sculpture by the Sea, Cottesloe, Perth, Australia  
 2005 Glampi/Blitz, Gallery Bluesky, Vienna, Austria  
 2005 Gallery Arena 53, Vienna, Austria  
 2005 Toronto International Art Fair, Odon Wagner Contemporary, Toronto, Canada  
 2005 Beijing Biennale, Beijing, China  
 2005 Sculpture by the Sea, Sydney, Australia  
 2006 Downtown at the Gardens, Palm Beach, Florida, USA w. Osborne Samuel  
 2006 Sculpture by the Sea, Perth. Australia  
 2006 Space, Art and the Environment, University of Iceland  
 2006 Heads, Figures and Ideas, Osborne Samuel, London, England  
 2006 Rosenbaum Contemporary, Boca Raton, Florida, USA  
 2006 Sydney Harbour Sculpture Trail, Sydney, Australia

## AWARDS

1981, 1984, 1989, 1991 3 month state grant  
 1982 Travel Grant from Culture Fund  
 1986 Resident Artist of Reykjavik  
 1988 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in competition for monument in Ísafjörður Town Hall  
 1990 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in competition for altar piece in Kópavogur Church  
 1991 Grant from Culture Fund  
 1992 Grant from ADEC, Association Dialogue Entre le Culture, France  
 1999 2 year state grant  
 2002 Grant from the Icelandic Visual Art Copyright Association

## WORKS IN PUBLIC PLACES

City of Reykjavik  
Icelandic National Radio, Akureyri  
National Gallery of Iceland  
Kópavogur Arts Fund  
Monument in Sandgerði  
Monument in Grundarfjörður  
Central Bank of Iceland  
Ísafjörður Town Hall  
Altar Piece in Kópavogur Church  
State Accounts Office  
Icelandic Monopoly in Mjódd  
Icelandic Monopoly in Spöngin  
The Reykjavik Savings Bank  
Town of Hafnarfjörður  
Presidential Export Award, Flugleiðir, Keflavik Airport  
Akureyri Town Theatre  
Icelandair Art Collection  
Icelandic Freezing Plants  
National Bank of Iceland  
Icelandic Export Board  
The College of Hamrahlíð  
The College of Reykjavik  
The College of Gardabaer  
The College of Akureyri  
The Award of the Icelandic Language Fund  
Akureyri Art Museum  
Europay Iceland  
The Catholic Church  
Kristiansstads Kommune, Sweden  
The Royal Carribbean  
Hall Financial Group, Texas, USA  
Kathryn Hall Vineyards, California, USA  
The Estate of Sir Rocco and Lady Forte, England  
Collection of Carl XVI Gustav, the King of Sweden  
American Seafoods, Seattle, USA  
The State Hospital in Copenhagen, Denmark  
The Icelandic College of Commerce  
Alcan in Iceland  
The City of Hull, England  
The Town of Vík, Iceland

Works in private collections in Iceland, Italy, USA, United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Australia

## PUBLICATIONS

1982	New York, article by Hans Frode, USA
1983	Votre Beaute, article by Ester Henwood, France
1985	Iceland Review, article by A. Ingólfsson
1986	Neues Glass, article by A. Ingólfsson
1988	The Plain Dealer, article by Helen Cullinan, USA
1989	Architecture & Planning, article by A. Ingólfsson
1991	Atlantica, article by Þorgeir Ólafsson
1991	Femina, article by Lena Rydin, Sweden
1998	UNT Kultur, Sweden
1998	Politiken, Denmark
1998	Norre Skaane, Sweden



1998	Kristianstadsbladet, Sweden
1998	Femina, article by Marika Wachtmeister, Sweden
1999	Helsingin Sanomat, Finland
1999	Waverley Tribune, Sydney, Australia
2000	Metro, Berlinske Tidende, Denmark
2000	Island Germany
2000	Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, Germany
2000	The Art Newspaper, International Edition
2001	La Voce di Mantova, Italy
2001	Coevit, Italy
2001	The Sunday Telegraph, Australia
2001	The Australian, Australia
2001	The Daily Telegraph, Australia
2002	Sculpture, article by D. Donimick Lombardi, USA
2002	Hephaistos, Germany
2003	Aluminium International Today, United Kingdom
2003	The Spectator, U.K.
2003	Nürnberg, Germany
2003	Stadtanzeiger, Germany
2003	Nürnberger Nachrichten, Germany
2003	Sonntagsblitz, Germany
2003	Sculpture Magazine, USA
2003	The Globe and Mail, Canada
2004	The Yorkshire Post, U.K.
2005	D'Art Magazine, article by D. Dominic Lombardi
2005	Dagbladet, Norway
2005	Stíll, magazine in Iceland
2006	Ský, magazine in Iceland
2006	Hull Daily Mail, UK
2006	The Yorkshire Post, UK

Numerous newspaper articles and interviews on television and radio in Iceland and abroad

#### VARIOUS

1985-87	Chairman of the Sculptors' Association
1984-87	Teacher at the Icelandic College of Arts and Crafts
1988	Lectures at Cleveland State University and Cleveland Art Institute, Cleveland, USA
1989	Book Cover for Shinchosha Company, Japan
1994-97	Member of the board of the National Gallery of Iceland
1998	Member of the Board of the Icelandic Association of Visual Artists
1999	Lecture at Sydney Art School, Sydney Australia
2001-03	Member of the Visual Art Committee of the Ministry of Culture, Iceland
2001	Lecture at Sydney Art School, Sydney Australia
2003	Lecture at The Sculpture Society of Canada, Toronto, Canada
2003	Lecture at The Goethe Institut, Toronto, Canada
2004	Lecture at "Sculpture in Public Space Symposium", Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

#### STAGE AND COSTUME DESIGN

1985	Reykjavíkursögur Ástu, The Basement Theater
1987	The Father, by Strindberg, City Theater, Reykjavik
1989	The Egg Theater
1990	Icelandic National Television

## CREDITS

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Front cover: detail of *Being There*, Cast Iron, height 53 in. / 135 cm