



# RAGNAR KJARTANSSON EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES

In a snow-covered field, a man in a winter coat playing a grand piano next to two standing microphones; in the background another stands in front of a large mountain; at the bottom of the picture, the title of the exhibition, "Ragnar Kjartansson, Emotional Landscapes."

**TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary**

**RAGNAR KJARTANSSEN  
EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES**

**Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza**

**Ragnar Kjartansson** is one of those rare phenomena that grace the art world just every now and then. He sweeps you up into his world, makes you love him for it, and introduces you to all his friends, which is such fun, and then you find yourself working with all of them over the next few decades of your life! I think that we all secretly hope that at some point in our lives we will be swept up by something completely foreign and never look back again at the world we knew before that precious moment! Well, I have been blessed by having it bubbling in my life for twenty years now, and I am still begging for more!

I was first introduced to Ragnar by Olafur Eliasson, in 2004 at the 101 Hotel in Reykjavík, where I was hosting a small party for Olafur and all his friends the day before his big opening at the Reykjavík Art Museum at the Hafnarhús. The place was filled with the most eclectic people imaginable: an assortment of the top artists, writers, musicians, actors, TV people, and billionaires from Iceland, where half of the entire country's population are in the creative industry.

The day after the opening, I bumped into Ragnar again. He was leading a band called Trabant at the time, and they were playing at the private residence of the president of Iceland during a reception for Olafur. Before I knew it, the whole band had lost their clothes and were standing there in a condition of undress in the president's living room, and the First Lady and I were crying with laughter! Ragnar was singing melancholic tunes in his underwear all night long, and I nearly moved to Reykjavík the next day.

A year later, in 2005, we were together again on a bus going to see an exhibition that TBA21 had commissioned from Christoph Schlingensiefel, *Animatograph-Iceland-Edition. (House of Parliament/House of Obsession) Destroy Thingvellir* during the famous retrospective of Dieter Roth at the Hafnarhús. That day I had made a huge detour to see Ragnar, who was holed up in a small, dilapidated theatre in an abandoned hamlet in the south of Iceland. I found him wearing a pinstripe suit and playing a guitar all alone on a stage amid a strange set of hand-painted fires. There was a small room in the back where he had pinned a few watercolours of juicy tongues to the wall. I bought a few off him then and there. He was all alone, just playing the blues guitar, apparently for one month solid, not at all concerned about whether anyone came by to see the performance in this truly desolate location. It was around that time that he committed himself to durational performances. His parents both worked in the theatre in Iceland, which would explain how he became the most theatrical of all artists, with a skill at balancing banality with profundity, irony with sincerity, the symbolic with the banal, and other contradictions that leave one confused.

That was when Ragnar asked me to support him on his most ambitious work to date, titled *God*, that was planned to be presented at The Living Art Museum in Reykjavík. And there was only one answer to that request, because in my world, the more moving artworks there are the better! Supporting unique artists like Ragnar who is very unusual, extremely independent, and uncompromising, as indeed was Schlingensiefel, is the only way forward. He is someone who will remain true to himself till the end.

The beginning of *God* was a performance with a band called Flís at the time, which included Helgi, Valti, and Davíð Þór. The later went on to accompany Ragnar during the rest of his career, appearing in nearly all the performative videos. Daniela Zyman, Artistic Director of TBA21, followed the process, and a few months later he sent us a copy of the video that they had made. It was brilliant, and it gives me great pleasure to present it at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza.

One of our greatest collaborations to date was the project we commissioned for our Augarten exhibition space in Vienna, where Ragnar shot a film with performances and live music. The exhibition rooms were his studio, the workshop was the backstage, and we convened twenty-four of his fellow artists and performers to reenact an Icelandic literary classic, Halldór Laxness's novel *World Light*, over a period of four months. The resulting work, *The Palace of the Summerland* (2014), was truly epic! And a unique set for one of Ragnar's most important works to date: *World Light – The Life and Death of an Artist* (2015) that we are really proud to be part of the collection and the time will come to show it in Madrid!

What everyone is of course very excited about is the opportunity to experience *The Visitors*, named by *The Guardian* as one of the most important artworks of the decade, and *The End – Rocky Mountains*, the seminal work that Ragnar presented at the Venice Biennale in 2009. Markus Reymann, the director of the TBA21-Academy, and I were in upstate New York when Ragnar shot *The Visitors* in a grand old mansion on the Hudson River, celebrated for its authenticity. Although it was truly rundown, it rested on a hill above the river and offered a real glimpse into the world that inspired so many great Hudson River School artists. The wonders of nature and its sublime glory just fused so perfectly with Ragnar's unapologetic romanticism. It is a unique opportunity to show these works together with the American painting collection at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, the largest collection of its kind in Europe. After all, our mandate is to create a dialogue with the family collection at the museum, beyond just building a contemporary program that complements it. It is our honour and pleasure to contribute whatever is welcome to this wonderful museum.

I am eternally grateful for all the friendships that have been fostered through these many years working with Ragnar. I have enjoyed the journey so much as I bask in his artistic generosity, his contagious love of life, and his ever-growing circle of friends.

**Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza**  
**TBA21 Founder and Chairwoman**



## Emotional Landscapes

Ragnar Kjartansson approaches art as a place of experimentation where he creates images through various media—drawing, painting, video, music—which, in many of his works, are then made into sets for durational performances. When shown in an exhibition, those performances become giant multimedia installations where the music, the *mise-en-scène*, and the emotions they invoke transport viewers to other landscapes. These emotional landscapes from which to reflect on humanity and the references that sustain Western culture.

Kjartansson comes from a family of artists. His godmother is a folk singer and his parents are actors. From them, he inherited a knowledge of literature and theater, as well as a passion for music. Having studied the canon of art history during his years of training at Iceland University of the Arts in Reykjavík, he shares the admiration of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists for the beautiful and the sublime, understanding these terms as the desire to make an image of the invisible—that which precedes the very act of creation: the emotions, sensations, and questions that feed it. Musical references are constant in his work, from Mozart to Icelandic folk music, the Italo-pop of the 1960s, Nina Simone, and Prince. A infatuation with both Gillian Wearing’s video works and Bob Dylan’s “All the Tired Horses” (1970) had the important effect of drawing Kjartansson to the idea of repetition, which is also a key presence in electronic music, another one of his reference points, and present in the theatrical rehearsals he watched during his childhood and youth. In Kjartansson’s practice, the device of repetition opens up both spatial and temporal possibilities. The dilation of time is, on the one hand, linked with his taste for the durational performances developed by figures like Marina Abramović, Chris Burden, and Bruce Nauman, and on the other with the work of the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, and especially his study of the potential of music to construct spaces and generate images on the basis of musical serialization.

Another important reference for Kjartansson is Dieter Roth, a Swiss artist who lived for much of his life in Iceland and had a transforming influence on the cultural context of that country. Partly a result of Roth’s legacy, Kjartansson’s art schooling was very conceptual, Fluxus-based and Dionysian. Furthermore, his art would not exist without the musician and visionary artist Björk Guðmundsdóttir and her gang of punk rockers-turned-poets and innovators. Their presence on the scene in Reykjavík inspired nothing but uncompromising artistic freedom and ideas on artistic community and its importance in the development of artistic practice.

*The Visitors* (2012) stems from the desire to turn music into a visual element. For this work, Kjartansson brought together some of the most renowned musicians and composers in Iceland—Shahzad Ismaily, Davíð Þór Jónsson, Kristín Anna Valtýsdóttir, Kjartan Sveinsson, Þorvaldur Gröndal, Ólafur Jónsson, and Gyða Valtýsdóttir—, all friends of his and great influences on his work, in a mansion on the bank of the Hudson River famous for having remained unaltered since the early nineteenth century. This work speaks of the myth of romantic love, rupture, and nostalgia for place, but also of the joy of the re-encounter, of being together and building a community.

That community is built through action, and shares not only a place but also a moment that in turn becomes an event. As such, it generates a special energy, a force that feeds the performances themselves, understood not as the final take that becomes an artwork but as the process that sustains and enriches it. This community pierces the materiality of the screen, and by making the viewer a participant in the intimacy of the moments experienced, it questions the limits of public space. Far from feeling an alienating distance, the viewer connects with the most human side of art. Patent in this work are the tensions between reality and fiction, between what things are intended to be and what they are, a game in which the staging and the lived experience are combined through a kind of magical and nostalgic tale, which transports us to those “once upon a times,” where we could inhabit the

lives of other people while at the same time rethinking our own. It is an idiorrhythmy, to use Roland Barthes's term from his seminar series *How to Live Together* (1976–1977), that eludes individuality to celebrate the potential of singularity. Music, Kjartansson has said, “becomes the representation of the perfect society: every musician performs a solo, and as individuals they come together to create something new.”

*The Visitors* is part of a series of works in which Kjartansson shares his interest in the culture and imagery of North America, and particularly American landscape painting of the nineteenth century, of which the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid possesses the most important collection in Europe. This series begins with *The End* (2009), where Kjartansson presents viewers with the popular image of the Wild West in order to question the cultural narratives that mediate our relationship to nature. That nature is often idealized, and its reflection neglects to show the social, racial, and ethnic conflicts that sustain it. *The End* was recorded with the musician Davíð Þór Jónsson in the Rocky Mountains, a snowbound landscape of extreme beauty and alien in its harshness which inevitably brings to mind the frontier, that romantic myth of the last place left to be conquered, and those almost fantastic characters who were able to survive in extreme conditions, pushing their lives to the limit. That limit is often diffuse and difficult to perceive along the way, and it also speaks to us of belonging, of what is there and is not, of what is seen and what does not show itself.

*The Man* (2010) recreates the landscape of Andrew Wyeth's painting *Christina's World* (1948), one of the most significant images in American art, which Kjartansson turns into a tribute to one of the most iconic figures of blues music, Pinetop Perkins, in his last “concert,” performing solo in front of the camera. It is a call for the vindication of these singular figures scattered across the historical narrative, the last upholders of a vanishing tradition.

In many of his works, Kjartansson references canonic Western painters such as Wyeth, Caspar David Friedrich, or Jean-Antoine Watteau (who inspired Kjartansson video series *Scenes of Western Culture*, 2015). Revisiting these iconic works of art by creating moving images that function like paintings, Kjartansson creates a fresh approach to the roots of contemporary culture by opening up new spaces to reimagine their meanings.

In this tour of some of America's cultural landmarks that makes up *Emotional Landscapes*, it is impossible not to mention Frank Sinatra, who Kjartansson emulates in *God* (2007). Situated in a setting that recreates a dance hall, the artist stands in front of a jazz orchestra and repeats the same line over and over again: “Sorrow conquers happiness.” With its humor and irony, this *tableau vivant* functions like a mantra or prayer that takes hold of us and transposes us to the many other voices that might use these words as a warning, an aid, or a lesson.

The exhibition's title, *Emotional Landscapes*, is taken from the beginning of the chorus of the song “Jóga” (*Homogenic*, 1997) by Björk. There, the composer speaks of friendship and of the Icelandic landscapes as a mental state. This show is a tour of emotions, with music and landscape as guiding threads. Mental states function as spaces for a possible understanding not only of ourselves but also of the communities we build and, on that basis, the world we inhabit. The works on view are installed in different areas of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, generating new contexts for the reading of the classical collections, reinforcing the idea that history helps us better understand the present, while at the same time, the present and contemporary artistic practices are fundamental tools for revising and rethinking history.

**Soledad Gutiérrez**  
Exhibition curator



In a smokey scene, a group of people gathered on a white columned porch; leaning over the balustrade, singing and playing guitar.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Ragnar Kjartansson** draws a large arc of cultural references in his performative practice. The history of film, music, theater, visual culture, and literature find their way into his video installations, durational performances, drawings, and paintings. Pretending and staging are key tools in the artist's attempt to convey sincere emotion and offer a genuine experience to the audience. Kjartansson's work has been exhibited widely. His work is currently the subject of a major solo show which inaugurated V-A-C's GES-2 House of Culture in Moscow. Other recent solo exhibitions and performances have been held at the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Barbican Art Gallery in London, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC, Reykjavík Art Museum, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and New Museum in New York. The artist received the 2019 Ars Fennica Award, and was the recipient of the Derek Williams Trust Artes Mundi Purchase Prize in 2015, and Performa's Malcolm McLaren Award in 2011. In 2009, Kjartansson represented Iceland at the Venice Biennale, and in 2013 his work was featured at the Biennale's main exhibition, *The Encyclopedic Palace*. Kjartansson was born in 1976 in Reykjavík and studied at the Iceland Academy of the Arts and The Royal Academy, Stockholm. He lives and works in Reykjavík.



A naked man wearing headphones playing acoustic guitar in a water-filled bath topped by an old wooden rack; on the right, an open door reveals a room with a bust on top of a wooden table.



## ***God*, 2007**

Single-channel video installation (color and sound), pink curtains  
30 min

Music: Davíð Þór Jónsson and Ragnar Kjartansson. Music producer and director: Davíð Þór Jónsson.  
Drums: Helgi Svavar Helgason. Piano: Davíð Þór Jónsson. Double bass: Valdimar Kolbeinn Sigurjónsson.  
Violins: Bryndís Pálsdóttir, Kristín Þóra Haraldsdóttir

Commissioned by TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and The Living Art Museum, Reykjavík  
TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection

*God* shows the young Ragnar Kjartansson in a simple black tuxedo, acting as the frontman of a jazz orchestra in a garishly retro make-believe ballroom outfitted with pink satin curtains. After the eleven-person orchestra hits the first few notes, Kjartansson, in his crooner-like mode, begins incanting the sentence “Sorrow conquers happiness.” For thirty minutes straight, the artist repeatedly serenades the viewer with his lamentation, each time with renewed passion, though he remains modest and distant in his expressions. A voluptuous pink satin curtain envelops the space of the installation, echoing the one on screen. The setting in *God* refers to 1950s Hollywood, playing on the clichés and stereotypes of this glamorous past. Kjartansson explores the imagery this era has produced—the poses and gestures that are clearly mere imitations of life, fake realities. Kjartansson’s position is neither critical nor celebratory: it is a form of detachment that has a meditative quality to it. He reminds us that there is something incredibly reassuring in the stereotypical, just as there is something soothing in repetition. *God* is indeed an allegory of inaction, a state of indecision that is greatly melancholic and redeeming at the same time.

*God* is the first large-scale performance-video work by the artist. It was commissioned by TBA21 for his first major exhibition at The Living Art Museum in Reykjavík. But the piece was first realized in 2006 as a live performance at a concert of the jazz trio Flís along with composer and pianist Davíð Þór Jónsson, bassist Valdimar Kolbeinn Sigurjónsson and drummer Helgi Svavar Helgason. Later arrangement in hand and along with string players, harpist and a brass section, they recorded the video in a single shot during the after hours in Reykjavík’s LazyTown film studio. “With repetition, narrative things like songs, concerts, or operas can lose their traditional form and become static—but vibrant, like paintings or sculptures,” Kjartansson explained. “I often look at my performances as sculptures and the videos as paintings.” Drawing on this idea, *God* is presented in the Rodin Room on the first floor of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, alongside the modern paintings from the Thyssen collections. This creates a moving context for the work, adding another layer to the contemporary references to pop culture and music.



Against a pink satin curtain backdrop, a man in a tuxedo singing to a microphone with open arms and eyes looking up; behind him, an eleven-piece band (grand piano, brass, double bass, drums, strings, and a harp) accompany him dressed in tuxedo or black dresses, next to microphones and music stands.



Against a pink satin curtain backdrop, a man in a tuxedo sings in front of a standing microphone; behind him, an orchestra of eleven-piece band (grand piano, brass, double bass, drums, strings, and a harp) accompany him all dressed in tuxedo or black dresses, next to microphones and music stands.

## ***The End*, 2009**

Five-channel video installation (color and sound)

30 min 30 sec

TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection

*The End* is a half-hour, five-channel video installation presented in a continuous loop. Produced with the support of The Banff Centre for the Icelandic Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale, this work was developed by Kjartansson in collaboration with the Icelandic musician Davíð Þór Jónsson at The Banff Centre in February 2009. The synchronized channels create an indeterminate country music composition and the projections are arranged in such a way that they reflect one another, the two musicians performing parts of the same song that emerge from the mix when viewers approach each screen.

Recorded in the mountains surrounding the town of Banff in the Canadian province of Alberta, *The End* presents Kjartansson and his regular collaborator Þór Jónsson in one of the artist's characteristic durational performances. The pair are seen against a back-ground of the frozen, bucolic North American landscape performing a series of impro-visations that come together in a single song, the composition shifting constantly between losing and gaining substance. The scenes start with the artists coming into the shot in front of the fixed camera, tuning their instruments, and then starting to play, filling the soundscape with their music.

Dressed like mountain men from popular culture, the two go on to incorporate several of the archetypal instruments of American music in the different channels: the acoustic and electric guitar, the banjo, the electric bass, the drums, the piano, and, of course, their voices. With the Rocky Mountains in the background and the sound of their coughing caused by the cold, the glitter of the banjo and the cadence of the guitar trace a country litany, an emotional and sonorous landscape in the key of the sun, though this sun provides no warmth. Only swigs of bourbon do that. The music transports us to a frontier world, an outlaw country resonant with the melancholy echoes of Townes Van Zandt, an antihero of American folklore and one of Kjartansson's key referents. It also leads us to the romantic heritage of the individual in the face of the immensity of nature, and the artist as mediator of the sublime, recalling the themes of Caspar David Friedrich.

Despite numbed extremities, there is no letting up for this song of eternal return, with its moments of quiet, its exclamations, and its lingering sections, which together reveal the end of a civilization able to do no more than replicate itself interminably and reflect itself in its own tragedy.





In a mountainous snow-covered landscape, the profile of a man in a beige coat and a fur hat playing a grand piano; with a standing microphone on the right.



In a snow-covered landscape two men with fur hats play acoustic guitar in front of two standing microphones, one leaning over a pine tree, the other against a boulder; a bottle of alcohol half-buried in the snow between them.



***From the Valley of World-Weariness in British Columbia (I-VII; IX-XII), 2011***

Watercolor on paper, series of 11

30.5 × 40.5 cm

(I) Gunnar Dungal Collection; (II) Private collection; (III and IV) Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York; (V) Listasafn Háskóla Íslands Collection; (VI) Luhring Augustine Gallery New York; (VII) Private collection; (IX) Listasafn Háskóla Íslands Collection; (X) Arnaldur Freyr Birgisson Collection; (XI) Markús Þór Andrésson Collection; (XII) Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

In this series of watercolors, the artist portrays the bare forests of British Columbia, a landscape in the Canadian Rockies that is also explored in the work *The End* (2009). The leafy forests of the Northern Pacific Coast are translated into a fragmented and spectral landscape dominated by ochres and whites, the result of a wildfire. Exhausted and fatigued, as indicated by the very title of the series, the “valley of world-weariness” gives rise to watercolors created with a sense of tragedy and melancholy despair.



Watercolor depicting snow-covered barren landscape, with upright and fallen tree trunks and scattered branches; signed by the artist bottom right.



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## ***The Man*, 2010**

Single-channel video installation (color and sound)

49 min

TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection

Ragnar Kjartansson's single-channel video from 2010, *The Man*, faithfully captures a performance by the ninety-seven-year-old Mississippi blues musician Pinetop Perkins. Perkins's upright piano is placed outdoors in the sunshine, in the midst of a vast expanse of grassland with an old barn and a few trees visible in the distance. The musician sits down at the piano, places his cane on his right side, and begins his act, a repertoire of songs and well-rehearsed puns and remarks that he has perfected over decades. Occasionally he takes off his hat and dries the sweat off his forehead, and ignoring the glaring heat, he delivers his show as if on stage. Smoking throughout the performance, mumbling and complaining about the badly tuned piano, Perkins cracks jokes and slips in and out of familiar songs and jingles. Finally he stands up and exits the frame.

Citing the composition of Andrew Wyeth's slightly melancholic and introspective painting *Christina's World* (1948), the video amalgamates the most contrary traditions. Not only the ancient blues legend himself but also his performance—marked by repetition, truncations, and miniature quotations—evoke the haziness of the contemporary caught in the moment of its transcendence into history and obsolescence, on the one hand, and nostalgia and melancholy for this soon-to-be-lost presence on the other. The artist's encounter with the blues legend turns into a materialization of a permanent state of transience and impermanence, an appropriate space for melancholy, beauty, and longing.

Pinetop Perkins passed away a year after the filming of this video. He was at the opening when this piece was shown in New York, chain smoking and telling jokes. Then, a month before his death, he became the oldest person ever to receive a Grammy in February 2011. This video is a portrait and a homage to him and the massively influential blues culture he represented and took part in creating.



In a field, a man wearing a white shirt, vest, and hat playing an upright piano, next to a leaning cane and standing microphones; an abandoned wooden house and trees in the background.



In a field, an upright piano, a stool, and standing microphones; an abandoned wooden house and trees in the background.



## ***The Visitors*, 2012**

Nine-channel video installation (color and sound)

64 min

**Musicians: Shahzad Ismaily, Davíð Þór Jónsson, Kristín Anna Valtýsdóttir, Kjartan Sveinsson, Þorvaldur Gröndal, Ólafur Jónsson, Gyða Valtýsdóttir**

**Commissioned by Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich**

**TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection**

*The Visitors* is a nine-channel video installation capturing a musical performance by a group of musicians in a grand, though derelict, mansion in Upstate New York. Set at the Rokeby Estate in Barrytown, on the Hudson River, a historic home dating back to 1815 and remarkable for its nearly untouched state and elegant disrepair, *The Visitors* is a hymn to romantic love (and its dissolution); a sensual commemoration of the artist's favorite 1970s band, ABBA; a nonconformist gathering of a group of friends and eclectic musicians; and an exploration of the durational performance, for which the Icelandic artist has become known in the world of art and performance. Themed to lyrics collaged from works by the artist Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir the cinematographic tableau in nine parts visualizes the performance of the profoundly melancholic tune in a long, uninterrupted, and repetitive 64-minute take.

Attracted both by the house's atmosphere of romantic decay and its eccentric inhabitants, Kjartansson and his musical cast decided to stage what the artist describes as a "feminine nihilistic gospel song," his very own genre of musical contradictions. The nine visitors take up various spaces indoors and outside—the sitting room, the kitchen, the bathroom, and the veranda—where Rokeby inhabitants make up a choir and a cannon firing squad, each frame inhabiting a separate yet very distinct setting, playing various instruments and singing the tune of the piece as if to themselves. It is only in the synchronization of the nine channels that the voices and instruments merge into a harmonic orchestration.

The performers, the amps, the clutter, the debris, the seeming mishaps, and marvelous objects and spaces mesmerize the viewer and bind the gaze. They authenticate the ephemeral moment and thus create a diaphanous transition between performance, music, and film—the interrelated fields of Kjartansson's ambitious artistic practice.

*A pink rose, in the glittery frost, a diamond heart, and the orange red fire  
Once again I fall into my feminine ways  
You protect the world from me, as if I'm the only one who's cruel,  
you have taken me, to the bitter end  
Once again I fall into my feminine ways.*

Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir



In the wallpapered interior of a mansion, a woman in a pink dress and headphones playing the accordion bare feet on an upholstered antique chair next to a standing microphone and an amplifier; in the background an upright piano, framed paintings, vases, a pedestal; and to the left, a window and a sculpture on a side table.



A man wearing headphones playing the grand piano next to a standing microphone in a room (furnished with a gilded frame, luxurious wallpapers, display chest with white bust, a lacquered screen, ceramics, a large open door revealing an adjacent room with paintings at the back and an open window on the side), at his feet a hurdy-gurdy (a wooden string instrument).

## About TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary is a leading international art and advocacy foundation created in 2002 by the philanthropist and collector Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, representing the fourth generation of the Thyssen family's commitment to the arts and public service. The TBA21 Foundation—based in Madrid and Vienna, with situated projects in Venice and Córdoba—stewards the TBA21 Collection and its outreach activities, which include exhibitions, fellowships, residencies, educational and public programming, and policy interventions. All activity is fundamentally driven by artists and the belief in art and culture as a carrier of social and environmental transformation and change.

In 2011, TBA21 established the research center TBA21-Academy, a cultural ecosystem fostering a deeper relationship to the Ocean through the lens of art to inspire care and action. For a decade, the Academy has been an incubator for collaborative research, artistic production, and new forms of knowledge by combining art and science. In 2019 TBA21-Academy inaugurated Ocean Space in Venice, a planetary center for exhibitions, research, and public programs catalyzing critical ocean literacy through the arts. Through its diverse program, TBA21-Academy has built a vibrant and dynamic local and international community at Ocean Space in Venice.

In 2022, the 20th anniversary year of the foundation, a new situated project is launched in a three-year partnership with the City of Córdoba, which will encompass an array of exhibitions created from the collection as well as residencies, performances, and educational programs at C3A Córdoba and in public space. The program in Córdoba and the inaugural exhibition *Abundant Futures* place an emphasis on the centrality of regenerative and healing practices to reorient the relationship with the commons and non-human others, towards futures of thriving communities and relationships. The works selected from the TBA21 Collection testify to the artistic and ecological ethos of the past two decades of working with artists towards new forms of production, action, inquiry, and environmental conservation.

Following its commitment to the oceans, TBA21 has expanded the Academy's research practices and methodologies to Córdoba and the Guadalquivir River, exploring its histories and possible futures. The results from its ocean-centered activities, long-term and multi-format research strands, led by artists in dialogue with multiple disciplines and practices, such as policy, activism, and conservation, are the foundation for a new platform investigating wider bodies of water including rivers and salt marshes. To build on this legacy and share our approach beyond traditional museological standards, we believe that a cultural response is necessary in order to shift paradigms towards more imaginative and regenerative thinking, which in turn will lead to more sustainable and abundant futures. This is how TBA21 seeks to define its future: we aim to shift our practice away from traditional collecting to generous, creative, and engaging programming to lower our carbon footprint and to spark new strategies of cultural emergence.

TBA21 is continually extending its advocacy work by sparking new collaborations across the arts, humanities, and sciences, partnering with other research and educational organizations, institutions, municipalities, and communities around the world, proliferating regeneration and care.

# Upcoming projects

## Exhibitions

**Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller**

***The Murder of Crows***

Nave 0, Matadero Madrid,

Centro de Creación Contemporánea

February 17, 2022–July 24, 2022

***Abundant Futures. Works from TBA21 Collection***

C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba

Curated by Daniela Zyman (TBA21 Artistic Director)

April 1, 2022–March 5, 2023

Bringing together different practices and generations of artists across geographies, *Abundant Futures* inaugurates a three-year cycle of TBA21 cultural programming in the city of Córdoba. Embracing abundance as a life-proliferating principle, an inexpugnable drive toward multiplicity, variability, and relationality, the exhibition celebrates the centrality of regenerative, creative, and commoning practices, across different scales. The vast selection of works from TBA21's collection includes works by John Akomfrah, Olafur Eliasson, Regina de Miguel, Asunción Molinos Gordo, Rivane Neuenschwander, Teresa Solar, Daniel Steegmann Mangrané y Rirkrit Tiravanija, among others.

***The Soul Expanding Ocean #3: Dineo Seshee Bopape***

*Ocean! What If No Change Is Your Desperate Mission?*

Ocean Space, Venecia

Curated by Chus Martínez

April 9, 2022–October 2, 2022

***The Soul Expanding Ocean #4: Diana Policarpo***

*Ciguatera*

Ocean Space, Venecia

Comisariada por Chus Martínez

April 9, 2022–October 2, 2022

**Himali Singh Soin**

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Curated by Soledad Gutiérrez

October 25, 2022–January 22, 2023

## Digital and educational programs

**OCEAN / UNI “*Imagine the Ocean Dry as Lavender*” *Mediterraneans as Hotspot for Climate Change and Adaptation***

Online. [www.ocean-archive.org](http://www.ocean-archive.org)

February 9, 2022–May 11, 2022

***TBA21 on stage***

[www.stage.tba21.org](http://www.stage.tba21.org) Season 04

Digital platform

Special projects featuring Ragnar Kjartansson, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, Giulia Foscari-Antarctic Resolution, Rahraw Omarzad, Sim Chin Yin among others

March 7, 2022–December 25, 2022



## Fellowship and residency programs

### Ocean Fellowship

Mentored by Rebecca Belmore y Harald Gaski

Ocean Space, Venecia

April 1, 2022–June 30, 2022

### STARTS4Water Residencies: The Future of High Waters

*Nature-Based Solutions for the Venetian Lagoon*

Alexandra Arènes, Sonia Levy, Meredith Root-Bernstein and Heather Anne Swanson

*Geo-Engineering Solutions for the Venetian Lagoon*

Diego Delas and Leonor Serrano Rivas

Ocean Space, Venecia

October, 2021–June, 2022

## Loans

### Kutluğ Ataman

*Küba*, 2004

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

Donated to the permanent collection by TBA21

November 22, 2021–March 3, 2022

### Joan Jonas

*Moving Off the Land IV*, 2014–2020

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

November 24, 2021–August, 2022

### Allan Sekula

*Black Tide / Marea Negra*, 2002–2003

*The Purloined Masterpiece. Images as Time Machines*

Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, Wien

April 12, 2022–October 23, 2022

### Jeppe Hein

*Reflecting Object*, 2006 and

### John M Armleder

*Global Domes XII*, 2000

*Camiños creativos*

Centro Gaiás Museum, Santiago de Compostela

November 9, 2022–April 9, 2023

### Tomás Saraceno

*Hybrid semi-social solitary Instrument HD 74874*, 2019 and

*How to entangle the universe in a spider web?*, 2018

*Brain(s)*

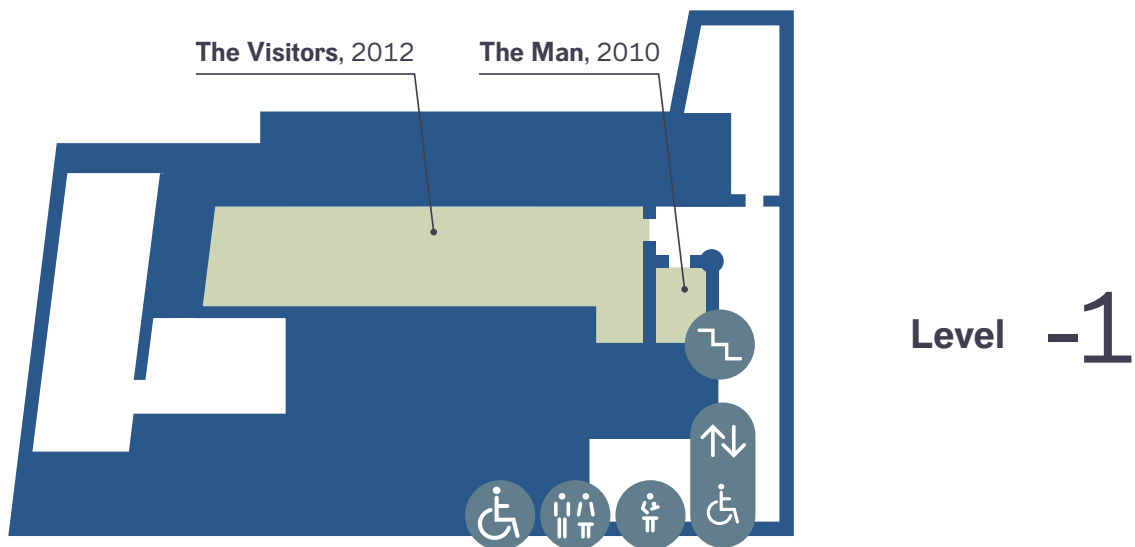
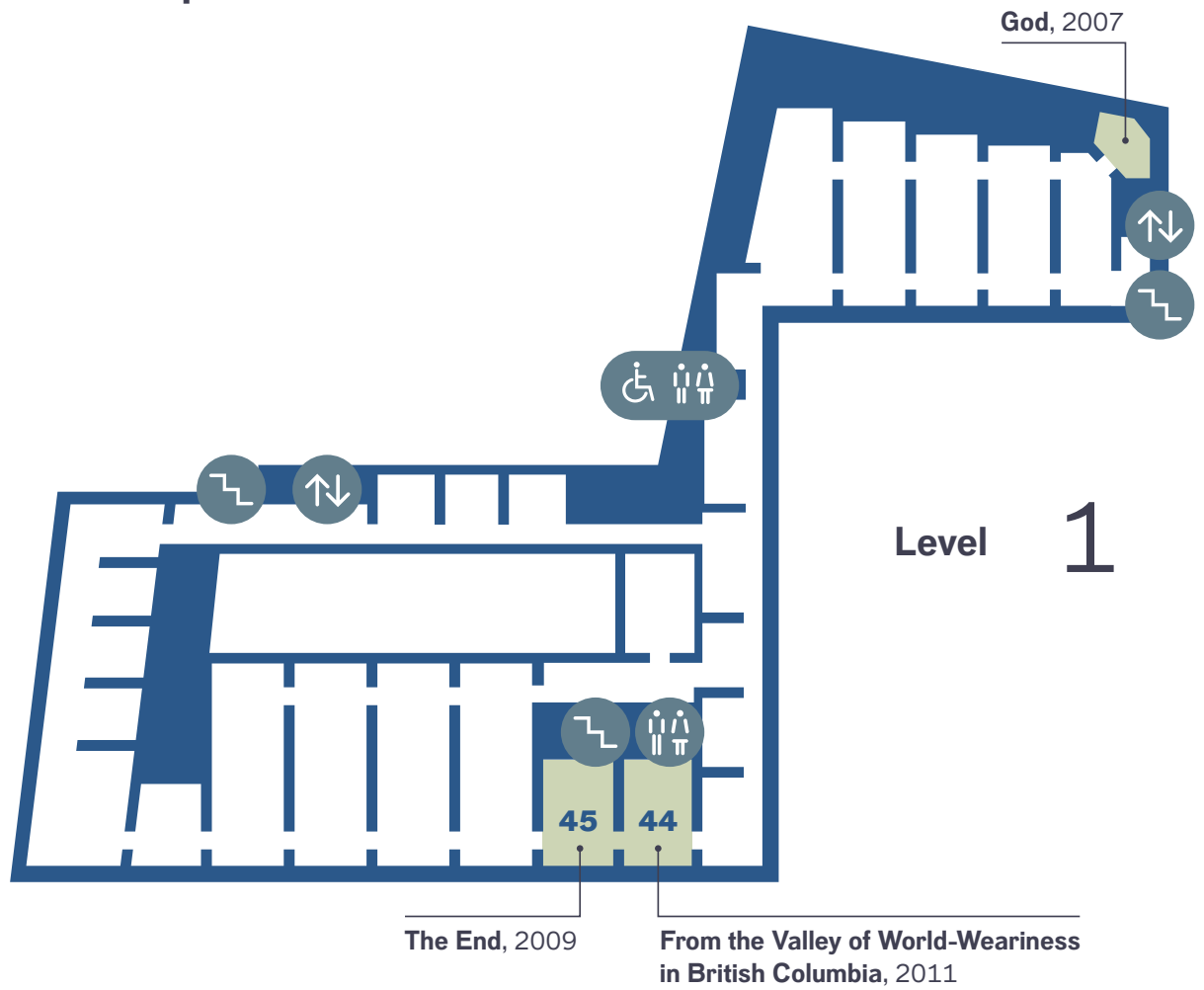
CCCB, Barcelona

July 12, 2022–November 2, 2022

Espacio Fundación Telefónica, Madrid

Dates to be confirmed

# Exhibition floor plan



# Ragnar Kjartansson: *Emotional Landscapes*

An exhibition organized by Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

## Exhibition

Museo Nacional  
Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Paseo del Prado, 8  
28014 Madrid (España)  
www.museothyssen.org

February 22-June 26, 2022

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**[www.tba21.org](http://www.tba21.org)  
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