

Sigurður Guðjónsson

Unseen Fields

BERG Contemporary

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One may wonder how to register the physical world and the laws that govern it through contemplation and attentiveness. Moreover, one may seek the experience of the otherness existing in our world that can turn into a compelling, persuasive and profound event. These reflections can be seen as attempts to explore our own nature in relation to other autonomous non-human entities, and they can become powerful drives for artistic expression.

Sigurður Guðjónsson appears to be asking these kinds of questions when he undertakes experiments in which he sculpts visions of hidden landscapes of matter. Through bringing into focus unseen topographies found in certain materials, he unveils them while retaining their uncanny and alien character. The guiding themes for his latest works refer to this line of inquiry: what is hidden within the medium that can be revealed and expressed through new visual codes. Macroscopic observations of imperceptible systems captured from within fluorescent tubes, optics, film, and cameras or, more recently, microscopes, are brought from the artist's studio to the gallery, unfolding across walls and surfaces. These visual designs, partly imagined and partly found, form tantalizing visions of elemental substances that are rooted in the physical world of which we are a part. Therefore the gallery becomes a space in which to consider phenomena that pass unnoticed in our daily life but present deeply poetic situations of sound and matter. The artist's obsession is the unveiling of phenomenological events that take place inside machines and across scales, combined into gases and chemicals, or in the frequencies, wavelengths, and energy fields embodied within these objects.

In Fluorescent the artist approaches the notions of light and material dynamics through focusing in extreme close-up on the processes that occur inside a fluorescent tube. The interior of the tube is portrayed, rotating and pulsing rhythmically on two opposed circular images, as a

new aesthetic environment; one governed and generated by the excitations and interplay between electricity, the noble gas argon, and the fine coating of phosphorous on the inside of the glass tube. High voltages ionize the gas and bring the radiation into the visible spectrum and into the realm where the artist can bring them to the attention of the viewer. The perspective of the images prohibits our immediate connection with their source, instead suggesting dust clouds floating in space or atmospheric anomalies. The installation is accompanied by a mesmerizing sound composition that is formed by directly tapping into the electromagnetic radiation emitted by the subject. By applying granular synthesis techniques to this source material, the artist creates another layer of interpretation of the discrete processes taking place within and radiated from the fluorescent tube. The work breaks the conceptions of matter as a stable system, instead of creating compositions that haunt us with the forms emerging from dynamic motions and randomized patterns.

Large machines and complex instrumentation, vast infrastructures, and the various detection and processing technologies of today allow transference of the human gaze to the remote domains of nature. Enigma takes us into such topography of uncertain contours as an in-depth survey of a fragment of carbon, as seen by an electron microscope. In the gallery, the viewer thus becomes the observer of an environment that could be seen familiar, yet offers us an uncanny view, closer to the landscapes of Mars, or the images from the depths of ocean chasms. This perspective could not be captured outside the vacuum chamber of the electronic microscope, a space devoid of air or gases, or time references. Thus, we could conclude that in the space created by this work time is created and passes as a non-linear, elusive narrative. Enigma's time is determined by a visual representation made up of vibrations and rhythms of the smallest imaginable scale, close to the sphere of the esoteric. The Greek *esoterikos* describes what is "intimate, reserved for the adepts" and describes precisely the representation of the hidden that is revealed through the film. Again, the artist treats the technical instrument as that which allows access to an aspect of nature that remains normally hidden. Despite the precision that anchors the experiment it seems that the artist himself would want to abandon control of the composition and act only as an observer.

In the exhibition, Sigurður Guðjónsson invites us to access a framework of sound and visual experiences that are built through observation of the most intimate levels of the subject. Time is suspended; we observe the pulsations of the matter that emerges. The processes of matter interfere and intersect with emotional and sensorial experience. As John Cage reminded us, “following the direction of unintended sounds is a renunciation of the human, it is a psychological journey that takes us into the world of nature where gradually or suddenly we see that humanity and nature are together in the world, not separate.” In these terms, all sounds, images, in their natural essence, can be explored through a true process of synthesis, combining elements and components to form new, connected, and reimagined wholes.

Mónica Bello, curator