

Ragnar Kjartansson and The National

A Lot of Sorrow

Luhring Augustine Bushwick

September 11 – December 21, 2014

Opening reception: Wednesday, September 10, 5 – 7pm

Luhring Augustine is pleased to present the premiere of *A Lot of Sorrow*, a new single-channel video work by Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson and American band The National. This is Kjartansson's third exhibition with the gallery, and his first show at Luhring Augustine Bushwick.

The six-hour video *A Lot of Sorrow* was filmed during a performance of the same name that was conceived by Kjartansson and executed by The National. For this event, part of MoMA PS1's *Sunday Sessions* in May 2013, The National played their three minute, twenty-five second song "Sorrow" live on stage, repeatedly and continuously, for six hours.

"Sorrow found me when I was young, sorrow waited, sorrow won," commences the song by The National, whose music and lyrics repeatedly conjure notions of romantic suffering and *Weltschmerz* – themes Kjartansson often addresses in his own practice. Kjartansson's works are connected through their pathos and humor, with each deeply influenced by the comedy and tragedy of classical theater. The artist's use of durational, repetitive performance to harness collective emotion is a hallmark of his practice.

Throughout *A Lot of Sorrow*, as the hours pass and fatigue sets in, the musicians subtly change and alter the song, experimenting while always keeping the original track recognizable. As the band plays, Kjartansson is often visible in the role of the roadie, periodically getting on stage to tend to the musicians with water and food. Multiple camera angles grant the viewer access to both the perspective of the performers and the audience members, as the band and the crowd feed off each other's energy with every repetition.

Ragnar Kjartansson (b. 1976) lives and works in Reykjavík. He has had solo exhibitions at institutions including the New Museum, New York, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Hangar Biococca, Milan, Frankfurter Kunstverein, and the BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna. *Song*, Kjartansson's first American solo museum show, was organized by the Carnegie Museum of Art in 2011, and traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. The artist received Performa's 2011 Malcolm McLaren Award for his performance of *Bliss*, and in 2009 he was the youngest artist to represent Iceland at the Venice Biennale. Kjartansson recently participated in *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the 55th Venice Biennale and will perform in October 2014 as part of Manifesta 10 in St Petersburg, Russia.

Formed in 1999, The National consists of vocalist Matt Berninger fronting two pairs of brothers: Aaron (guitar, bass, piano) and Bryce Dessner (guitar), and Scott (bass, guitar) and Bryan Devendorf (drums). Their first full-lengths *The National* and *Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers* preceded their signing to Beggars Banquet in 2004. *Alligator* (2005) raised their profile as The National grew into an incendiary live band. *Boxer* (2007) sold over three times as many copies as its predecessor and saw them transformed from underground stars into a rock institution. *High Violet* (2010) released on 4AD brought the band global critical and commercial success. *Mistaken For Strangers*, a documentary featuring The National, opened the 2013 TriBeCa Film Festival. The band recently released their highly anticipated sixth album, *Trouble Will Find Me*, which received widespread critical acclaim and was included on "albums of the year" lists by Pitchfork Media and Rolling Stone.

Sunday Sessions was organized by Jenny Schlenzka, Associate Curator with Mike Skinner, Producer, and Alex Sloane, VW Fellow, and was made possible by MoMA's Wallis Annenberg Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art through the Annenberg Foundation. The VW Dome at MoMA PS1 is made possible by a partnership with Volkswagen of America.

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