

LUHRING AUGUSTINE

Ragnar Kjartansson

Scenes from Western Culture | *Architecture and Morality* | *World Light*

November 5 – December 22, 2016

Luhring Augustine: 531 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011

Luhring Augustine Bushwick: 25 Knickerbocker Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11237

Opening reception (Chelsea only): Friday, November 4, 6 – 8 pm

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Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce concurrent exhibitions of Ragnar Kjartansson's recent work in our Chelsea and Bushwick galleries.

Kjartansson engages multiple artistic mediums, creating video installations, performances, drawings, and paintings that draw upon myriad historical and cultural references. An underlying pathos and irony connect his works, with each deeply influenced by the comedy and tragedy of classical theater. The artist blurs the distinctions between mediums, approaching his painting practice as performance, likening his films to paintings, and his performances to sculpture. Throughout, Kjartansson conveys an interest in beauty and its banality, and he uses durational, repetitive performance as a form of exploration.

Scenes from Western Culture (2015), which will be on view in Chelsea, is a series that depicts idyllic representations of Western life. The nine videos, or "cinematic paintings," present non-narrative scenes: a couple dining at a New York restaurant, children playing in a garden in Germany, a woman swimming in a private pool. The picturesque tableaux unfold almost like advertisements, portraying tranquil, inviting moments that captivate in their beauty. Also on view in Chelsea will be *Architecture and Morality* (2016), a series of paintings Kjartansson completed during a two week period in the West Bank in conjunction with the Center for Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv. Taking his easel and paints to the contested Israeli settlements, the artist made representational oil paintings of homes *en plein air* from morning till dusk, finishing one painting a day. Kjartansson's straightforward landscapes contrast with the political complexity of the region they represent.

In the Bushwick gallery Kjartansson will present *World Light - The Life and Death of an Artist* (2015), a four-channel video based on Icelandic author Halldór Laxness's four-volume novel *World Light* (1937-40). *World Light* portrays the tale of an orphan who yearns to become a masterful poet and his search for greatness, a quest which is riddled with difficulties, mediocrity, and tragedy. Kjartansson produced and filmed his take on the epic novel with his friends and family over one month at Vienna's Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA21) in 2014. As a performance that was open to the public, the artist and his comrades built sets, made costumes, wrote music, rehearsed, and filmed scenes on site. The documentation and culmination of the performance realized in Kjartansson's video materializes the essence of the novel it depicts, poignantly showcasing a romantic, idealistic undertaking and revealing its human imperfections. With its broken narrative of longing, death, and art, Kjartansson describes the video as a cubist painting of a novel.

Kjartansson (b. 1976) lives and works in Reykjavík. The artist is currently the subject of a survey exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Park, Washington, D.C., which traveled from the Barbican Centre, London, having been on view from July to September 2016. Kjartansson has had major solo shows at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; the Frankfurter Kunstverein; the BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Kjartansson participated in *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the Venice Biennale in 2013, Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg, Russia in 2014, and he represented Iceland at the Venice Biennale in 2009. The artist is the recipient of the 2015 Artes Mundi's Derek Williams Trust Purchase Award and Performa's 2011 Malcolm McLaren Award.

For more information about Ragnar Kjartansson, please contact Geneva Viralam (Geneva@luhringaugustine.com) and Julia Speed (Julia@luhringaugustine.com) or 212.206.9100. For press inquiries about the artist, please contact Caroline Burghardt (caroline@luhringaugustine.com) or 718.386.2745.