



**Ávarp  
forseta Íslands  
Ólafs Ragnars Grímssonar  
við foropnun sýningar  
Ólafs Elíassonar  
„Frost Activity“  
Listasafni Reykjavíkur  
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Að skapa nýja sýn, nýjan skilning, nýja reynslu, að sjá okkur sjálf og veröldina, umhverfið og náttúruna í nýju ljósi, að ögra venjum og vanahugsun, að gefa listinni nýjar víddir – og okkur reynslu sem engu líkist sem við áður þekktum; slíkar eru gjafirnar sem Ólafur Elíasson færir okkur, bæði hér í dag og einnig á fyrri árum; ekki aðeins okkur heldur einnig gjörvöllum menningarheimi Vesturlanda.

Enginn myndlistarmaður af íslensku bergi brotinn hefur jafn ungur náð slíkri frægð í veröldinni. Reyndar er Ólafur nú þegar kominn í flokk með Halldóri Laxness, Björk og Helga Tómassyni sem eru eins og við vitum í fremstu röð á sínu sviði enda hafa sérfræðingar um hræringar í samtímalist ítrekað fullyrt að Ólafur sé einn athyglisverðasti myndlistarmaður okkar tíma.

Íslensk náttúra hefur reynst honum notadrjúg uppspretta nýrra leiða til að skapa ferska sýn á heiminn og klæða hana í fjölpættan búning. Landið, náttúran, veðrið og öræfin hafa markað listrænan þroska hans og orðið efniviður í einstæða sköpun. Ýmsir sem um Ólaf hafa fjallað telja að norræn eða íslensk vitund gegnsýri myndsyn hans á frumlegan og afgerandi hátt.

Að sjálfsögðu erum við fús að deila honum með veröldinni, jafnvel Dönum, en metum mikils hve ríkulega hann sækir föng og innblástur til Íslands, endurskapar skilning okkar á landinu, fegurð þess og eiginleikum.

Last autumn I greeted with apprehension the title of Ólafur Elíasson's exhibition "Frost Activity" because the previous winters in

Iceland had been green and warm without ice or snow. What disappointment it would be for the foreign guests who flock here to witness yet another of Ólafur's creations if the country of his ancestors thus let him down and did not live up to its name. But clearly the gods and the spirits of this mysterious land were once again on his side and as the exhibition gradually grew from one day to the next the cold and stormy winter of earlier times arrived with force in Iceland and the visionary "Frost Activity" turned out to be a poetic prediction.

Following the splendid impact and acclaim of his "Weather Project" in the Tate Modern we are proud to host "Frost Activity" at Reykjavík Art Museum and I thank the city and the curator for their initiative in inviting Ólafur Elíasson to visit his native country in such an inspiring way. The generosity of the young and successful Icelandic entrepreneur Björgólfur Thor Björgólfsson, who has built successful business endeavours all over Europe, has enabled us to enjoy this exhibition and I want to thank him especially here today and hope that the fruits of the globalised Icelandic business machine will continue to be used so wisely.

May I also greet our guests from abroad with a special welcome and express the hope that during their stay they will gain some sense of the extraordinary creativity which is now making Iceland such a stimulating place. Perhaps the creativity inherent in the geological nature of our country, manifested through volcanic eruptions, geysers and earthquakes, new lava fields, new islands and mountains has also found its way into our souls and produced a uniquely vibrant scene in the arts, in music, literature, the theatre and other fields, making our small country closer to a modern renaissance than most other places in Europe.

Ólafur Elíasson is a fascinating interpreter of this creativity and through his works he gives us new visions, a new sense of ourselves, an experience which transforms our understanding of the world, expands the boundaries of our civilisation. It is an extraordinary achievement to be able to transform our thinking in such a way, to challenge successfully the legacy of the great masters.

The energy and versatility of Ólafur's works produces almost like a volcano which is continuously erupting one fascinating exhibition after another. Next week another will open in Oslo and throughout the year he will with new exhibitions continue to fascinate the entire art world, challenging himself to maintain the outstanding leadership he has already achieved.

Ólafur generously shares his gifts with others and on behalf of the people of Iceland I congratulate him and hope that the spirit and creativity of our magnificent land will continue to inspire him in the years to come.