

## HangarBicocca, the contemporary art space in Milan, presents *The Visitors* by Ragnar Kjartansson

The video installation opens the new exhibition program  
chosen by Vicente Todolí for HangarBicocca

On view September 19 – November 17, 2013  
Opening September 18, 2013



Ragnar Kjartansson, *The Visitors*, 2012 (Stills). Nine channel HD video projection. Duration: 64 minutes.  
Photos: Elisabet Davids. Sound: Chris McDonald. Video: Tómas Örn Tómasson. Sammlung Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst and courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York & i8 Gallery, Reykjavik.

July 30, 2013 (Milan) – *The Visitors*, one of the most significant works by **Ragnar Kjartansson** (Reykjavík, 1976), will be on view from September 19 to November 17, 2013 in the monumental industrial space of **HangarBicocca** in Milan. The exhibition is curated by **Andrea Lissoni and Heike Munder** (Director of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich).

This is the first exhibition of the curatorial program drawn up by **Vicente Todolí**, recently appointed artistic advisor for HangarBicocca. The project was also chosen in light of Dieter Roth and Björn Roth's upcoming show, opening November 6 in the space. "Ragnar Kjartansson has a strong biographical tie with Dieter Roth and his family," explains HangarBicocca's curator Andrea Lissoni. "Kjartansson's grandfather was one of Dieter Roth's closest friends and had a collection of his works. This legacy had an influence on Kjartansson's multidisciplinary, ever-evolving approach to making art." Creating a dialogue among the different exhibitions at HangarBicocca is one of the principles that will drive the space's artistic program in future years.

*The Visitors* is being shown in Milan thanks to the support of **Pirelli, Founding Member and Promoter of the Fondazione HangarBicocca**. The meeting of different art forms, music and visual art, theater and performance, and the coexistence of "high" and "popular" culture, is a reflection of Pirelli's attitude toward a multidisciplinary approach to culture and research, one that has always focused on opening up to the community and bringing together different fields of knowledge, research, and innovation.

Moreover, this project is also capable of involving, with its different languages, various audiences—from music lovers to theater and cinema-goers, as well as those with an interest in contemporary art—

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reflecting HangarBicocca's ongoing effort to broaden its art audience and also bring new inspiration and ideas to the general public.

*The Visitors* exhibition gives the public an opportunity to experience an important contemporary art project, capable of involving the audience in an emotional, musical, and visual experience unlike any other. The installation has already been seen in international institutions and galleries—the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich in 2012, which commissioned it, the Lühring Augustine Gallery in New York, and TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Vienna in 2013—arousing great interest, both critical and public.

With its title and concept inspired by the last album of the Swedish group ABBA, *The Visitors* offers a reflection on the theme of the power and persistence of affective ties and of the melancholy and romanticism that are typical of the artist's Nordic culture. Music is a fundamental element in all the artist's work and, as Kjartansson himself says, it is used as "an almost sculptural element." Composed by the artist himself for the poem entitled *Feminine Ways* by his former wife, the performer Asdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir, the soundtrack alternates powerful and subdued sounds.

The work consists of nine videos on a scale of 1:1, in which the audience sees different musicians, all friends of Kjartansson's (including Kristín Anna and Gyða Valtýsdóttir, founding sisters of the historic Icelandic band Múm, and Kjartan Sveinsson, keyboard player until 2012 with the famous Sigur Rós). For over an hour, the musicians, each with a different instrument, sing and play the same melody of a song called *Feminine Ways*. The nine scenes are set in the many rooms of the large, dilapidated nineteenth-century Rokeby Farm in upstate New York. The nine audio and video tracks were made separately but are shown together on large screens. The display has been specially designed by the artist and curators to emphasize the visual and audio elements of the work. The audience is thus placed at the center of a continuous, choral piece.

Ragnar Kjartansson's performance work embraces the entire spectrum of the arts, from theater to music, through to sculpture and the visual arts. His love of acting and stage productions is characteristic of all his work. He creates performances which he sometimes turns into video installations and in which he often plays the part of paradoxical characters. His work combines fact, fiction, and myths of contemporary culture, in shows that have a hypnotic effect and always border between mysticism and parody.

*The Visitors* is being show in cooperation with Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst.

## **Ragnar Kjartansson and Music**

Right from the outset, Ragnar Kjartansson, one of the most highly acclaimed artists of his generation, has experimented with music while working with art.

His very close involvement with the music scene, which comes partly from his family background, led him as a teenager to form a number of bands. In 2001 he joined *Trabant*, a pop rock band with which he later made records and gave concerts. Kjartansson famously took part in *Performa* in 2011, during which he presented *Bliss*, a performance that earned him the Malcolm McLaren Award.

The title of the piece *The Visitors* is derived from the 1981 album *The Visitors* by Swedish pop band ABBA; the album was to be the group's final record as divorce and internal strain ended their collaboration. The artist explains the link: "Over the years, I've often taken inspiration from ABBA's music, in which I find a profound melancholy beneath the sumptuous show-biz veneer of their story. *The Visitors* takes inspiration from their last album: in both cases there is talk of divorce and isolation (the cover shows the group in an old abandoned house), and of sensational defeats: one has the feeling that all is about to change."

## **About the Artist**

Ragnar Kjartansson was born in 1976 in Reykjavík, where he still lives and works. He studied at the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik and at the Royal Academy in Stockholm.

He has taken part in many exhibitions and festivals, including *Manifesta* and *La Triennale di Torino* in 2008. In 2009 he became the youngest artist to represent Iceland at the Venice Biennale. In 2011 the

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Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, the Museum of Contemporary Art (North Miami), and the ICA Boston put on his solo *Song* exhibition, and the Frankfurter Kunstverein showed his first sweeping retrospective in Europe. In 2012 a solo exhibition of his works was put on at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin. He was invited to the 55th Venice Biennale, in the exhibition curated by Massimiliano Gioni, *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, in which, for the entire duration of the show, he put on a captivating musical performance in the aquatic spaces of the Gaggiandre of the Arsenale.

## **Pirelli and HangarBicocca**

HangarBicocca is an important contemporary art center run by Pirelli which, as Founding Member and Promoter together with Regione Lombardia, now entirely supports its activities. Marco Tronchetti Provera, Chairman and CEO of Pirelli, is also Chairman of Fondazione HangarBicocca.

The exhibition area was created by converting a former factory, turning it into an authentic art factory in which research and innovation perfectly reflect the company's corporate values. It has been brought back to life in 2012 with exhibitions of international artists such as Wilfredo Prieto, Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Carsten Nicolai, Tomás Saraceno, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Mike Kelley.

With its new program by the artistic advisor Vicente Todolí, this center of art in Milan is reaffirming itself as a place capable of attracting an international public with exhibitions at the highest curatorial level and of great visual impact, thanks to the presence of monumental works rarely shown to the public. Pirelli's commitment to offer everyone free access to programs of such high quality is the natural continuation of a long tradition of dedication to culture, research, and innovation that has been an inherent part of the company ever since it was first set up 140 years ago. Contemporary art is indeed the medium that best reflects the values of innovation, openness to diversity, and the search for solutions that are capable of anticipating the future. Pirelli also guarantees a dynamic calendar of activities for the non-specialist public, schools, and families, with workshops, films, summer camps, and evening events—which are also free of charge—making HangarBicocca a living space that is helping to transform a former industrial district into one of the most interesting and lively in Milan and Europe.

## **Data Sheet**

Title of the exhibition	The Visitors
Artist	Ragnar Kjartansson
Curated by	Andrea Lissoni and Heike Munder
Opening	September 18, 2013, 7 p.m.
Dates	September 19 – November 17, 2013
Place	HangarBicocca
Address	Via Chiese 2, Milano, Italy
Opening hours	Thursday – Sunday, 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.
Admission	Free
Workshops	Every weekend, for children (11:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.)
Guided tours	Sunday
Main Sponsor	Pirelli
Phone for the public	+39 - 02 6611 1573
Info for the public	<a href="mailto:info@hangarbicocca.org">info@hangarbicocca.org</a>   <a href="http://www.hangarbicocca.org">www.hangarbicocca.org</a>

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