

# ÓLI G. JÓHANNSSON



## PREFACE

The art of Iceland possesses an elusive quality. Shrouded in youth and mystery, its creative force blends a natural vitality and originality of form with abstract influences from western Europe.

At once intimate and confrontational, the works of Óli G. Jóhannsson are paintings of raw expression; distinctly individual and exhaustingly laborious. His semi-abstract, semi-figurative narratives are laden with sentiments of his surroundings: open landscape, freedom of form and a love of nature. Like the life lived in the harsh lands of his Iceland, his paintings sing with organized chaos rich with methodology and language.

Óli G. Jóhannsson was discovered by Opera Gallery in 2006, and the fruitful friendship helped introduce his works to collectors all over the world. Deeply influenced by his home country of Iceland, a region where over half of the land is volcanoes, geysers, sand fields, glaciers, rivers and fjords, Óli G. Jóhannsson's use of colors, techniques and themes are in constant reference to his natural environment. His entire being captured on canvas, Óli G. Jóhannsson's works are intoxicating memoirs of a vibrant life. In true tragic poetry, his paintings remain vociferous legacies to a life cut tragically short.

In celebration of Óli G. Jóhannsson's creativity and spirit, we are thrilled to present a solo exhibition of his work on the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his passing. Like a true artist, his works will continue to speak long into the future, perpetually imparting a quiet wisdom on the world.

Gilles Dyan

President and Founder  
Opera Gallery Group

Jean-David Malat

Director  
Opera Gallery London

## FOREWORD

Outside of literature, artistic endeavors have not enjoyed a long history in Iceland's cultural development. Art began to seriously emerge in all its variations in Iceland about a century ago, with painting taking shape only in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the country became more and more connected to the outside world. As young artists began venturing abroad to study and pursue their passion, they returned from Europe in the first decades of the century, inspired and influenced by the prevailing themes of abstract expressionism.

Iceland's small community of fine art painters has thoroughly enriched our cultural milieu. As with any art form, the development of painting has undergone various phases in Iceland's short history. Since pre-WWII, it has progressed from expressionism to abstract expressionism of the postwar period, consistently influenced by both the trends and sub genres of western Europe and the temperament of their Icelandic homeland.

Painting, as in all art forms, does not abide by artificial borders of the modern world. Art breaks down the barriers of culture, language, politics and even time itself. Inasmuch as the painter does not paint for a certain ethnicity, gender, religion or politics, he or she will always be reacting to their immediate social and natural environment. This simple but essential statement of fact is intimately bound to the creative work of the artist. Even to a novice of all things artistic, the artwork of Óli G. Jóhannsson clearly contains all of these influences and experiences.

Celebrated art critic and art historian Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson, who is also the most prominent expert on Óli G. Jóhannsson's work, put it eloquently when he wrote the following:

"The paintings of Oli G. are extensions of himself; generous in their creativity and reference to the art of painting, powerful, joyous and complex. They are built on his unshaken belief that the modernism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has still much to offer." One can take great solace in the many works Óli G. Jóhannsson left behind. His powerful and colorful strokes on the wide canvas will continue to impress and bear testament to his commitment to the main tenet of modernism, freedom of expression combined with a healthy dose of experimentation.

Although creative artwork from Iceland has become increasingly recognised in the international art scene over the past few years, Óli G. Jóhannsson is one of very small group of Icelandic visual artists to have enjoyed great success abroad. This success has been built upon the solid partnership established between him and the Opera Gallery, a partnership that has continued after his death, as manifested in this exhibition here at the Opera Gallery in London.

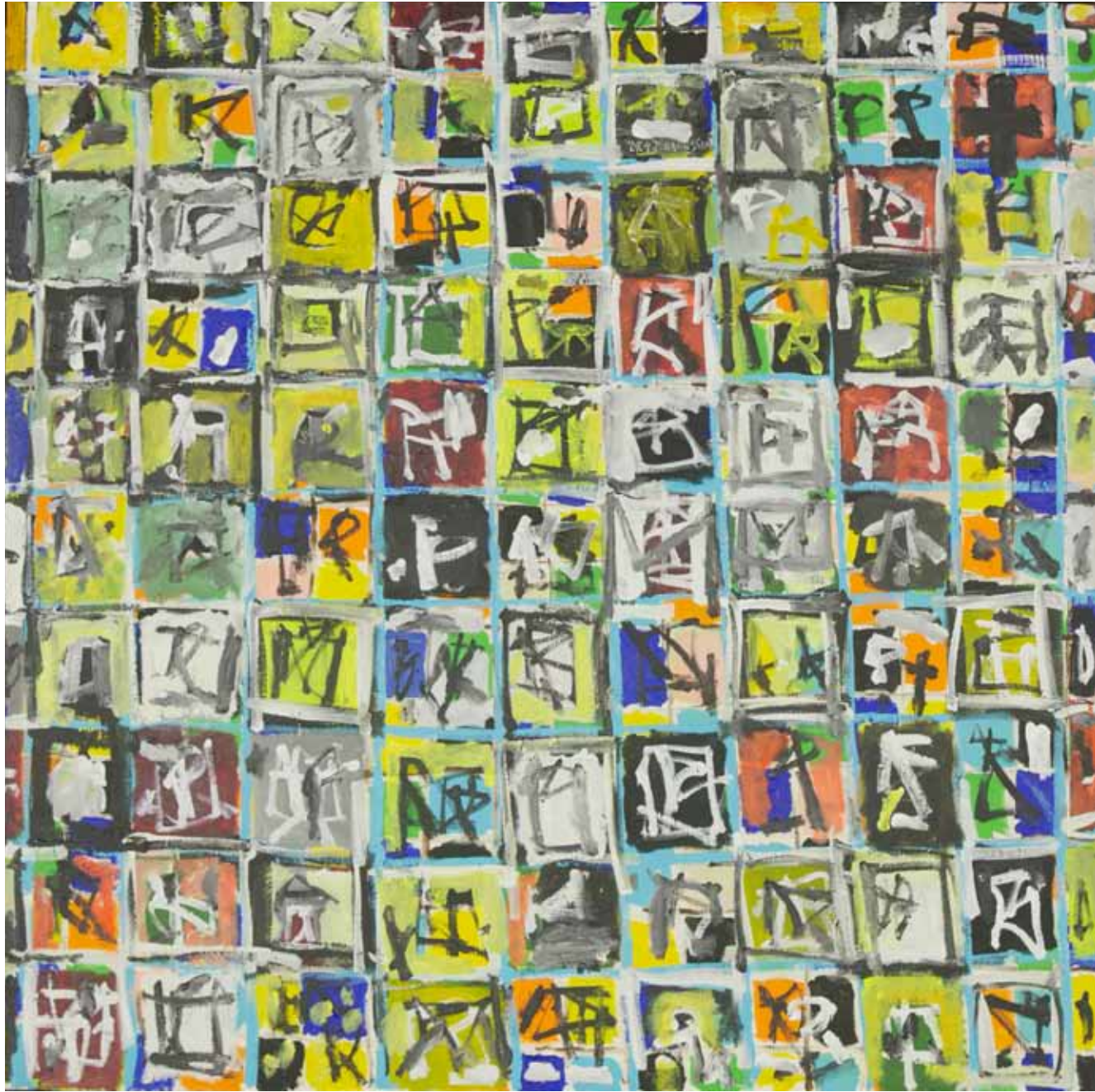
Óli G. Jóhannsson has put his strong mark on the dynamic Icelandic cultural landscape as one of the more important painters of the abstract expressionism tradition of the last decades.

H.E. Thordur Aegir Oskarsson

Ambassador  
Embassy of Iceland in the UK







A Long Silence, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



On Both Sides, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



Hot Sunday, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



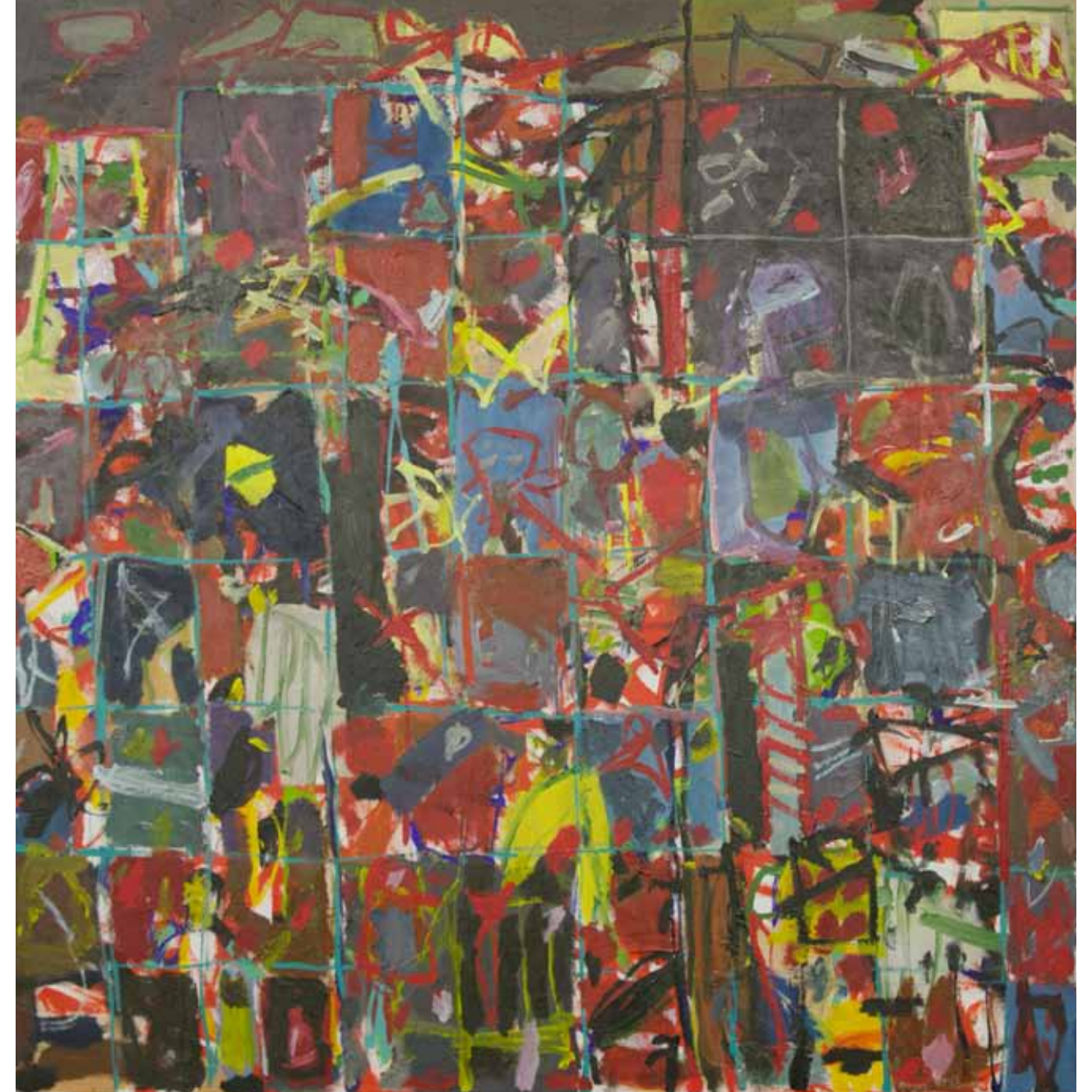
Hot Morning, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



Full House, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



If One Attempts to Explain, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



In Between Sunshine and Shower, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



Seconda Horisonda, 2010  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.





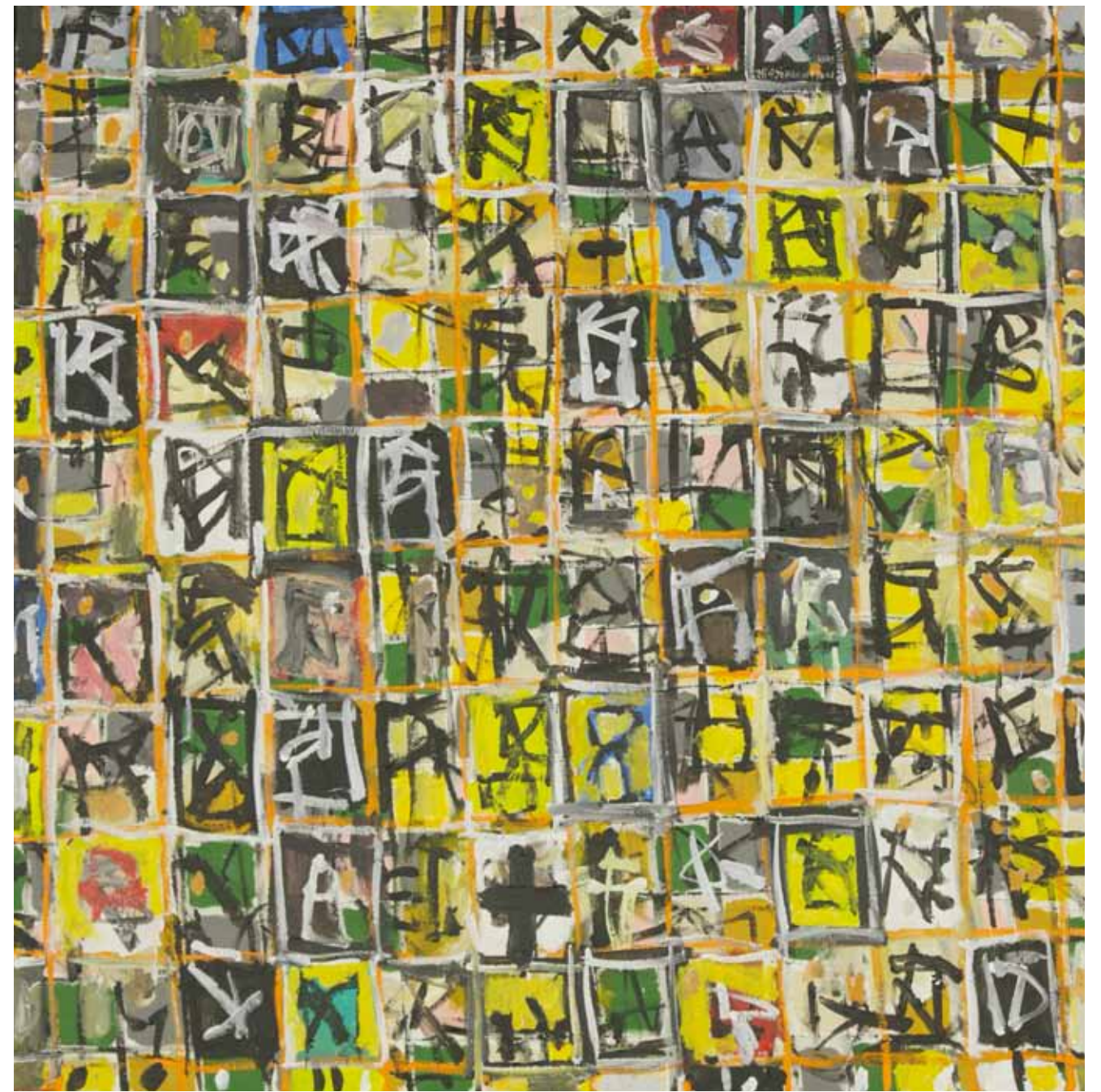
I Saw the Bird, 2006  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



Lost Outpost, 2009  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



My Concept of Freedom, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



Often It Must Be, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



A Lot of Dreams and Plans, 2009  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



That Explains A Lot, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



There's the Answer, 2010  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



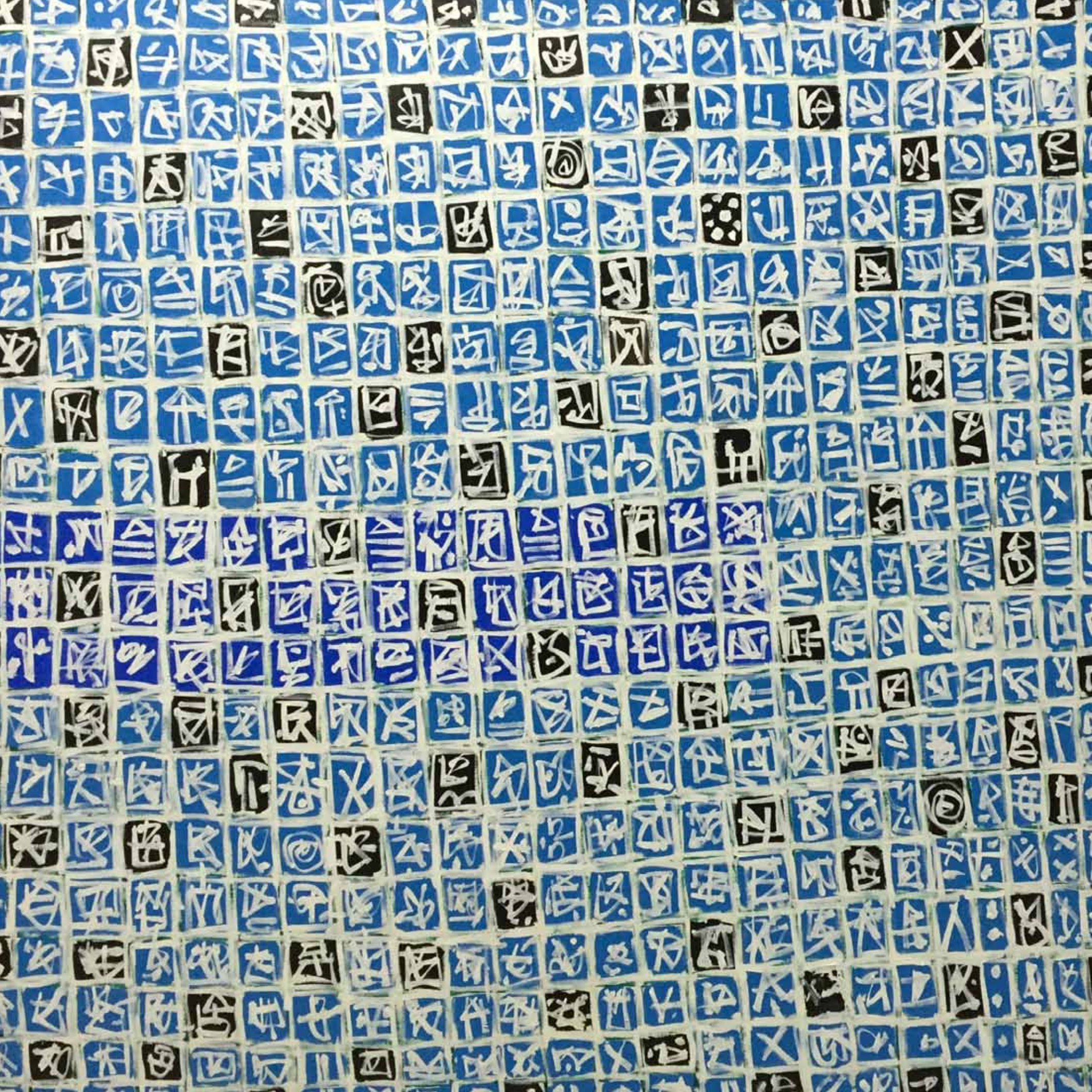
Without Complaining or Explaining, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



After a Figurative Intermezzo, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
100 x 100 cm - 39.4 x 39.4 in.



Beyond the Threshold, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



At the Same Time, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



The Summer's Glory Fakes the Autumn, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



The Big Butterfly, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.





Under the Half Moon, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



Visage d'Háhóll, 2007  
Acrylic on Canvas  
145 x 145 cm - 57 x 57 in.



Acting on Impulse  
Acrylic on Canvas  
200 x 200 cm - 78.7 x 78.7 in.



Welcome to Negrar, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas  
90 x 90 cm - 35.4 x 35.4 in.



## BIOGRAPHY

### EDUCATION

- 1966 Graduated from Menntaskólinn, Akureyri, Iceland
- 1966-1967 University of Iceland, Reykjavík. Economics
- 1964-1968 Flying School Freyr, and Tryggvi Helgason, Akureyri
  
- 1972 Founder of Society of Visual Arts, Akureyri
- 1975 Founder of Myndsmiðjan Akureyri (Art School)

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1973 Landsbankasalurinn Akureyri, Iceland  
The National bank of Iceland, Akureyri
- 1974 Gallery Háhóll, Akureyri, Iceland
- 1975 Gallery Háhóll, Akureyri, Iceland
- 1977 Gallery Háhóll, Akureyri, Iceland
- 1978 Ráðhústorgið á Akureyri, Iceland. Outside exhibition on the centrum of Akureyri
- 1979 Gamli Lundur, Akureyri, Iceland (Art house)
- 1980 Sjallin, Akureyri, Iceland
- 1982 Hótel Blönduós, Iceland  
The Cultural House in Húsavík, Iceland  
The Cultural House in Sauðárkrókur, Iceland  
The Highschool in Ólafsfjarður, Iceland  
Skipagötu húsið á Akureyri, Iceland (Art house)
- 1989 Gamli Lundur, Akureyri, Iceland (Art house)
- 1991 Listhúsið Þing, Akureyri, Iceland (Art house)
- 1995 Listhúsið Þing, Akureyri, Iceland (Art house)
- 1996 Laudinella, St. Moritz, Swiss (Hotel Laudinella)
- 1998 Listaskálinn í Hveragerði, Iceland (gallery)
- 1999 Linsan í Reykjavík  
Ketilhúsið á Akureyri, Art Centrum Akureyri, Iceland
- 2000 Gallery Marius Vrontos, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Gallery Reykjavík, Iceland  
Samlagið, Akureyri, Iceland
- 2001 The Art Museum in Akureyri, Iceland  
Nominated Artist of Akureyri  
Gallery Torsö, Odense, Denmark  
Hús Málaranna, Gallery, Reykjavík, Iceland
- 2002 Velux Kunstforening, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Kromian Reumert, Kunstforening, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Gallery Sævars Karls, Reykjavík, Iceland  
Karólína Restaurant, Akureyri, Iceland

2003 Hús Málarána, Gallery, Reykjavík, Iceland  
 Commitments kunstforening, Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Radisson's SAS Hotel SAGA, Reykjavík, Iceland

2004 Radisson's SAS Hótel Amsterdam Airport, Holland  
 Hillebrantshús, Blönduósi, Iceland  
 Ketilhúsið Akureyri, Art Centrum, Akureyri, Iceland  
 Friðrik V, Akureyri, Iceland  
 Linsan, Reykjavík, Iceland

2005 Karólína Restaurant, Akureyri, Iceland  
 Mubla, Kópavogur, Iceland  
 Skipagötuhið, Akureyri, Iceland  
 Sólon Islandus, Reykjavík, Iceland

2006 Gallery Turpentine, Reykjavík, Iceland  
 Keflavík Airport, SAGA-lounge, Keflavík, Iceland  
 Gallery Hirn, Austría

2007 Opera Gallery, London, UK  
 Studio Stafn, Reykjavík, Iceland  
 JV-Gallery, Akureyri, Iceland  
 Populus Tremula, Gallery, Akureyri, Iceland

2008 Opera Gallery, New-York, USA  
 Studio Stafn, Reykjavík, Iceland  
 Opera Gallery, Singapore  
 Festarklettur-listhús, Akureyri, Iceland

2009 Studio Stafn, Reykjavík, Iceland  
 Opera Gallery, London, UK  
 Festarklettur-listhús, Akureyri, Iceland

2010 Festarklettur-listhús, Akureyri, Iceland  
 Opera Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
 Studio Stafn, Reykjavík, Iceland

2011 Listasafn Reykjanesbæjar (Art gallery), Keflavík, Iceland

#### BOOKS PUBLISHED

2001 Artist of the town. Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson  
 2006 Óli G. Jóhannsson. Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson

#### ART FAIRS

2000 Art Copenhagen, Denmark  
 2001 Art Herning, Denmark

#### AWARDS

2001 «Artist of Akureyri»

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1973 Landsbankasalurinn á Akureyri (Nationalbank of Iceland): «25 from Akureyri»  
 1975 Gallery Háhóll, Akureyri, Iceland : Eiríkur Smith, Jóhannes Geir, Kjartan Guðjónsson, Halldór Pétursson, Baltasar and Óli G. Jóhannsson  
 Cultural house in Húsavík, Iceland : Eiríkur Smith, Kjartan Guðjónsson, Gísli Guðmann, Jóhannes Geir, Benidikt Gunnarsson, Veturliði Gunnarsson and Óli G. Jóhannsson

1976 The Nordic house in Reykjavík, Iceland (The Nordic house). Artists from Iceland  
 FÍM Cultural house in Sauðárkrókur. Artists from Akureyri

1979 Gallery Háhóll, Akureyri, Iceland : Helgi Vilberg og Óli G. Jóhannsson  
 The Nordic house in Reykjavík, Iceland

1980 Kjarvalsstaðir, Reykjavík, Iceland (Art Museum)  
 Örn Ingi, Einar Helgason, Helgi Vilberg, Aðalsteinn

1983 Folk Art Museum in Reykjavík, Iceland  
 «Norðan 3» : Guðmundur Ármann, Kristinn G. Jóhannsson and Óli G. Jóhannsson

1994 Listhúsið Þing, Akureyri, Iceland (Art gallery)  
 1999 Listaskálinn í Hveragerði, Iceland (Art gallery)  
 2000 Gallery Torsö, Odense, Denmark : Asger Jorn, Herup, C.H.Perersen, Ingolv av Reyni, Eyun av Reyni, K.Svenson and Óli G. Jóhannsson  
 Copenhagen Art Fair, Denmark (Gallery Marius Vrontos)  
 Gallery Maríus Vrontos, Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Summer exhibition, Ketilhúsið, Akureyri, Iceland (Art gallery)

2001 Gallery Reykjavík, Iceland (Summer exhibition)  
 Listasafnið á Akureyri (Art Museum) Summer exhibition - painters from Akureyri  
 Gallery Torsö, Odense, Denmark. Abstrakt expressionists from Scandinavia  
 Art Fair Herning, Denmark (Gallery Torsö)

2002 Hús Málarána gallery, Reykjavík, Iceland  
 Summer exhibition. Linsan, Reykjavík : Kristján Davíðsson and Óli G. Jóhannsson

2003 Hús Málarána gallery, Reykjavík, Iceland : Einar Hákonarson and Óli G. Jóhannsson

2005 Kaupvangsstræti, Akureyri, Iceland (Art Alley) : Guðmundur Ármann and Óli G. Jóhannsson

2007 Scandinavian House, New York, USA : Selected painters from Iceland  
 2008 Opera Gallery, London, UK (The Summer Art Show)  
 Festarklettur Listhús, Akureyri, Iceland : Kristján Eldjárn and Óli G. Jóhannsson  
 Opera Gallery, Monaco

2009 Opera Gallery, London, UK (Life)  
 Studío Stafn, Reykjavík, Iceland (Christmas exhibition)  
 Opera Gallery, Dubai, UAE  
 Opera Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland

2010 Opera Gallery, London, UK (Valentine's day)  
 Opera Gallery, New York, USA

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