

Guðrún Vera Hjartardóttir b. 1966

Ever since Guðrún Vera's first exhibition in Iceland in 1996, figuration has dominated her work. Her little plasticine beings drew considerable attention at her 2001 exhibition *Roots* at Gallerí Hlemmur. These miniature sculptures had a human look to them, but alluded to nature in various ways, combining the characteristics of both. At her exhibition *Waiting for a Masterpiece* at Gerðarsafn in spring 2004 these beings reappeared, in a new role in which the spectator played a substantially greater part. Her little beings are neither child nor adult, male nor female, but are most reminiscent of embryos, totally purged of both hair and gender. Guðrún Vera has opted to take the sculpture down from the pedestal that it has been granted by art-historical tradition, and locates her beings on a low, floating, island-like socle. There they remain, incredibly mundane and stable in complete peace of mind, gazing up with a distinctive glint in their eyes which arouses probing questions. The spectator even wonders whether these beings are of this world or another, and countless motifs race through our minds – are they elves, angels, extraterrestrial beings? They also recall the creation, God creating man in his own image from clay. But the plasticine serves to distance the divine association, and more modern motifs come to mind. Figures such as the Teletubbies. Like Guðrún Vera's beings, the Teletubbies have an air of innocence about them, and their plastic faces conceal any kind of expression, yet they still radiate incredibly warm and intense emotions. Another "modern" being that springs to mind is Gollum, in the form we know from Peter Jackson's films of *The Lord of the Rings*. Bald, small and goggle-eyed, Gollum is not so unlike Guðrún Vera's characters in appearance, but the resemblance stops there, because the malicious glint in Gollum's eyes is far removed from the innocent, inquisitive twinkle in the eyes of her beings.

Iðunn Vignisdóttir