

Welcome to the World of Mankind  
**In your own image**

What fascinates me most about Guðrún Vera's works is how they manage to touch me on different levels. When I look at them I am everything at once, a spectator in an art gallery, an individual in a modern technological society, mother, sister, daughter, an artist with a certain knowledge of art history, but at that moment I am primarily a person – an emotional being aware of the fact that somewhere inside of me is a space where words no longer have meaning and primal feelings prevail. We have all experienced this space engulfed by joy, fear, or pain; something has happened in our lives that has cast us, perhaps without warning, in to this space and when we emerge again we cannot find the words to describe our experience, just as it can be difficult to put into words dreams that trickle away like sand between our fingers as we slowly wake up. It is hard to define these small sculptures. They represent neither children nor elderly but, first and foremost, an image of the human condition. The contemplative look on the faces makes it impossible not to stop and take notice and to lose oneself in this world of the primeval and the present, nature and technology, life and art.

Guðrún Vera's images create a world of their own; the spectator walks into the middle of this world but does not become a part of it. These sculptures relate to each other and it is the whole that speaks to the spectator. This closed world seems to belong to another time or another dimension. It might originate in paintings of the past, such as the works of Hieronymus Bosch but its roots run even further back. It is said that god created man from clay, and the appearance and presentation of these works of art evoke images of an ancient world when mankind was in direct contact with nature and an integral part of it; a time that is not preserved in words but that has left behind mysterious phenomena, such as Stonehenge in England – a time probably ruled by customs and rites closely linked to nature, the seasons, and the stars.

Art is unique in the sense that it can bridge gaps between the past and the present, nature and culture, the artist and the spectator. Guðrún Vera's work does not only point to a remote past but also to more recent trends in art where artists have relied on intuition in their creative process, such as the works of the Surrealists at the beginning of the last century. From the very beginning, artists have worked with the human form in various ways and the body has been a recurrent theme. Increased knowledge of the structure of the body has changed our attitudes towards it and its potential. Genetic research is now an established part of life and so are the increasing possibilities for reproduction, which seem to have developed hand in hand with decreasing fertility in modern society. One wonders, however, how the world of the children of today will be tomorrow. Guðrún Vera's sculptures are also linked to the present through the world of cinema, particularly science fiction (some of the sculptures may remind one of E.T., others of characters in Star Trek) but they also have a certain human intimacy that comes from the hands of the artist who shaped them.

Guðrún Vera is always conscious of the presentation of her works and she deliberately uses the installation to control the beholder's experience. In Hafnarhús she has chosen to create a continuum that the visitor walks through. The white platforms, however, create a clear boundary between life and art and give the visitor both the necessary distance to find his own interpretation and enough space to appreciate the figures. The tiny community created here reminds us of our own contemporary community, a community of people who have settled down in conditions that vary in humanness. Here wild nature meets civilisation. A vibrant core shivers within hard walls and survives, just as art always endures.

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