

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***Chromo Sapiens: Pavilion of Iceland to build hypernature at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia***

*Working with curator Birta Guðjónsdóttir, Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter will use hair, her trademark material, to create a large-scale multisensory environment*

The 2019's Icelandic representation in Venice will occupy a former warehouse in Giudecca transforming it into an immersive, cavernous environment where colour, sound and irresistible textures will guide the visitors through a journey that aims to heighten their senses and awareness.

***Chromo Sapiens*** is a visceral work: it evokes one's desire to return to nature in a modern culture that is overwhelmed by artificial matters. Accompanied by a specially commissioned sound work by the Icelandic metal band HAM, the installation will allude to organic structures that range from the microscopic to the largest scales of natural forms, as the visitor is enveloped in a psychedelic and surreal experience.



Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter. Photo: Magnus Unnar. Courtesy of the artist.

Shoplifter's oeuvre sits in the realm between visual arts, performance and design, and is anchored in a fascination with pop culture and mass production as much as in her homeland's Nordic culture, its folk art, crafts and textiles. The artist explores society's obsession with beautification juxtaposed with its fascination with the grotesque. Shoplifter's installations oscillate between the extremes of being alluring and seductive,

yet eerie and disturbing.

Shoplifter and Birta Guðjónsdóttir have previously collaborated on three of Shoplifter's large-scale commissioned projects from the series *Nervescape*, one for the Havremagasinet Cultural Center in Boden, Sweden (2012), one at the Momentum 8 – Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art in Moss, Norway (2015) and, most recently, one at the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik (2017).

On their collaboration, curator Birta Guðjónsdóttir notes *“Shoplifter’s large-scale installations have been extremely well received by the public and critics for over a decade. She has developed unique ways of working with textile in space, and it is very exciting to collaborate with her as she weaves guests to the Icelandic Pavilion into a multi-level and multi-layered sensory, emotive and intellectual experience.”*

Iceland has participated in La Biennale di Venezia since 1960 and, since 2005, the Icelandic Pavilion has been commissioned by the Reykjavik-based Icelandic Art Center. Björg Stefánsdóttir, Director of the Icelandic Art Center, says: *“La Biennale di Venezia is the oldest and most important art biennial in the world and Iceland’s solid participation throughout these years represents a key opportunity to connect the Icelandic abundant art scene with the international landscape. We are thrilled to participate in this major event by commissioning Shoplifter’s new project.”*

The installation will be accompanied by a catalogue published in the format of a double vinyl, comprising the specially commissioned sound work by Icelandic metal band HAM, and recordings of essays by Hilton Als, Timothy Morton and Oddný Eir Ævarsdóttir.

Join the conversation on social media by following the [@IcelandicPavilion](#) on instagram and using the hashtags **#ChromoSapiens**, **#IcelandicPavilion2019** and **#BiennaleArte2019** across all platforms.

### **Exhibition details**

#### ***Chromo Sapiens***

Pavilion of Iceland at the Biennale Arte 2019

Location: Spazio Punch, Giudecca

Running dates: 11 May - 24 November 2019

Official opening and press preview will be announced in 2019.

**For further press information and images, please contact:**

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## Notes to Editors

**Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir / Shoplifter** (b. 1969) is an Icelandic artist who has been based in New York since 1994. For the past 15 years, she has explored extensively the symbolic nature of hair and its visual and artistic power. Working with both synthetic and natural hair, she creates sculptures, wall murals and site-specific installations that explore themes of vanity, self-image, fashion, beauty and popular myth.

Shoplifter's major projects include a window installation commissioned in 2008 by MoMA, New York, in collaboration with the art collective a.v.a.f., as well as the Liverpool Biennial in the UK in September 2010. The headpiece she created for Björk on her album cover of *Medúlla* in 2004 was presented at MoMA in New York as a part of the Björk retrospective in 2015. In 2011 Shoplifter received The Nordic Award in Textiles with a large solo exhibition at the Textile Museum of Borås, Sweden. That same year she was awarded The Prince Eugen Medal for artistic achievement from the King and Royal Crown of Sweden. For further information: <http://www.shoplifter.us/>

**Birta Guðjónsdóttir** (b. 1977), is an Icelandic curator based in Reykjavik and Berlin. From 2014 - 2018 she held the position of Chief Curator at the *National Gallery of Iceland*, Reykjavik. She co-curated *Momentum 8 – Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art, Norway*, in 2015 and was also a guest curator of the Nordic Art Triennial at Eskilstuna Art Museum, Sweden in 2013. Guðjónsdóttir has independently curated over twenty exhibitions in cities such as Basel, Berlin, Boden, Copenhagen, Oslo, Melbourne, New York and St. Petersburg, as well as across most art museums and art spaces in Iceland.

Other institutions she has worked with in the past include *The Living Art Museum*, Reykjavik (director, 2009-2011); exhibition space *101 Projects*, Reykjavik (artistic director, 2008-2009); *MuHKA; Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp*, Belgium (assistant curator, 2008); SAFN-Collection of Contemporary Art, Reykjavik (curator, 2005-2008) as well as having participated in the *Nordic Baltic Curatorial Platform*, initiated by FRAME, Finland; the *Curatorial Intensive program of ICI: Independent Curators International*, New York; and *The Cornwall Workshop*, organised by Tate St. Ives.

## About the Icelandic Art Center

Based in Reykjavik, the Icelandic Arts Center (IAC) is dedicated to promoting Icelandic visual arts internationally. Affiliated with Iceland's Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the IAC strengthens networks between the visual arts scene in Iceland and the global cultural sphere. Through funding and logistical assistance, IAC assists Icelandic artists and arts professionals in producing projects abroad, and facilitates cooperation with public and private associations, organisations, and enterprises worldwide. The Icelandic Art Center (IAC) is Commissioner of the Icelandic Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia on behalf of the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. [www.icelandicartcenter.is](http://www.icelandicartcenter.is)