

ISE CULTURAL FOUNDATION

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Volcano Lovers – From Iceland and Japan

November 13, 2009 – January 2, 2010

Opening Reception: Friday, November 13, 6–8PM

Artist Talk: Saturday, November 14, 2–4PM

Artists: Hildur Bjarnadóttir, Hreinn Friðfinnsson, Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir, Haraldur Jónsson, Noriko Ambe, Atsushi Saga, Katsuhiko Saiki, Yuken Teruya

Curated by Birta Guðjónsdóttir and Shinya Watanabe



One view of catastrophe. This had happened. Who would have expected such a thing. Never, never. No one. It is the worst. And if the worst, then unique. Which means unrepeatabe. Let's put it behind us. Let's not be doomsayers. The other view. Unique for now: what happens once can happen again. You'll see. Just wait. To be sure, you may have to wait a long time. We come back. We come back.

– From Susan Sontag's "The Volcano Lover"

ISE Cultural Foundation is pleased to present "Volcano Lovers – from Iceland and Japan" collaborative exhibition of Icelandic curator Birta Guðjónsdóttir and Japanese curator Shinya Watanabe.

Although the historical connection between Iceland and Japan has not been close in the past, these two island nations share obvious cultural and geographic parallels. They are located at the west and east poles of Eurasia, respectively, and have both been greatly influenced by having volcanoes as a prominent part of their natural terrain. For this exhibition we are interested in looking beyond these likenesses and exploring further the common ground manifested in current ways of living in Japan and Iceland, and what these cultural elements can mean for the inhabitants of these two nations today.

The science of plate tectonics has shown how Iceland was created through a split along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the boundary between the North American and Eurasian Plates, which created a new crust on both sides of the diverging boundary. Japan was, however, created on the triple junction of the Pacific, Philippine, and Eurasian plates, and this caused the formation of high mountains and a deep ocean trench.

In other words, earth is created in Iceland, and perishes in Japan. Both nations share an experience of the power and energy of earth's transformation, construction, and deconstruction. Their volcanic geographies and island cultures share certain affinities in their geopolitical traditions, and in both places there is a strong influence of animism, as shown by *satru* in Iceland and Shintoism in Japan.

Quoting the title of Susan Sontag's novel *The Volcano Lover*, this exhibition aspires to capture the energy and emotions that lie under the surface of minimalist expressions for these two different nations with similar backgrounds. These works subtly explore sensory experience, relativity, and the complexities of daily rituals.

From there, we can expand our understanding of creations, which are heavily inflected by nature and geographical influences, even within the seemingly mundane realm of everyday life. We hope that this exhibition can be a platform for all of its participants and our guests to research those elements individually and collectively through future artistic practices and inspiring experiences.

Volcano Lovers exhibition is supported by the Consulate General of Iceland in New York and the Consulate General of Japan in New York. This exhibition is sponsored by ISE Cultural Foundation, Center for Icelandic Art (CIA) and the Kao Foundation for Arts and Sciences.



ISE CULTURAL FOUNDATION is established in 1984 and a non-profit organization supporting emerging curators and artists.