

HELI KASKINEN / Statement

When I was young, my grandmother tried to teach me to wink. After several unsuccessful attempts, I finally came up with my own version: blinking with both eyes at the same time. My parents, unaware of this lesson with my grandmother, took me to the doctor to have my eyes checked, but the mystery of why I was closing my eyes was not resolved. Later in life, my grandmother gradually lost her memory and was unable to recognize me. But on our last encounter she winked at me. This small gesture turned the whole situation around. She remembered me after all, and our little secret.

The wink of an eye may be a subtle gesture, but it has the capacity to completely change the essence of things. It can emphasise the humorous nature of a situation or introduce a whole new perspective. Kristján and Sigurdur Guðmundsson have in their art utilised the potential of the humorous approach, revealing the multifacetedness of things otherwise considered banal or simple and thereby offering a brand new perspective on them. I have approached the everyday life around me in a similar way.

At the core of my work is the notion of reversing things. What can be turned? To turn around, to turn back time, to turn out... In The House Project (1974), the conceptual artist Hreinn Fridfinnsson turned a whole house inside out, revealing its interior on the outer walls and thus offering a whole new perspective on everyday life. This gesture of turning is also my starting point. I, too, disclose different experiences for external inspection.

My works are based on unspoken family secrets and whispers around them. I am interested in the stories hiding within the domestic walls. With my works I approach the private sphere and life from a different, even humorous, point of view. A secret can contain simultaneously both a heavy and a light streak, as in the story of me learning to wink. My goal is to take up how humour can facilitate reviewing the lived life and also to reveal secrets of my own: Yes, I have hugged a cactus!

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