

The opening of *Transitions/Vistabönd* on August 29, 2019

Exhibition in Veröld–House of Vigdís

Ávarp rektors Háskóla Íslands, Jóns Atla Benediktssonar

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the opening of *Transitions* – the exhibition that has been set up in association with the 9th Partnership Conference between the University of Manitoba and the University of Iceland. The participants are the composer Anna Þorvaldsdóttir, the visual artists Karlotta Blöndal, Olivia Plender, Ragnar Kjartansson and Unnar Örn, and the author Kristín Ómarsdóttir. With one exception, they all have in common the link of having been artists in residence at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Alberta, Canada, or have had work exhibited there. I am happy to say that I visited the wonderful Banff Centre last year while Karlotta Blöndal was in residence and saw her excellent works on display there.

In my position as the Rector and President of the University of Iceland, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the artists, and to the galleries and symphony orchestras for allowing us to exhibit some of the works in question.

While the subject matter of the six artists varies and manifests itself through classical music, drawings, text and painting, their ensemble of works can be said to cast a light on the subject of movement as in changes, transformations and challenges. As such, the exhibit mirrors the theme of the 9th Partnership Conference, which is Migration.

To migrate is to relocate. As the program of the partnership conference indicates, we are tracing the experience of transitions from the times of settlers and shamans in 10th Century Iceland to nineteenth century Icelandic immigrants in Canada and the US, and from there to both descendants of immigrants and new migrants in contemporary Europe and North America - through history, literature, languages, anthropology, gender studies, political science, business and law.

I would like to thank Kristján Steingrímur Jónsson, art historian and newly appointed Director of the University Art Collection, for his excellent work as the curator of the exhibition. The task of the Director of the Art Collection is of great importance to the university. Those of you who have had the chance to visit the Main Building and other buildings on campus would have noticed the presence of art. The University of Iceland has been of the conviction for some time now that the vision of artists enriches our endeavors. The presence of art is also here to remind us that its creative power runs parallel to that of sciences.

In closing, I would like to thank Kristján Garðarsson, the architect of Veröld – House of Vigdís for his favorable response to the Exhibition-idea. I would also like to thank Dr. Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Professor at the University of Iceland and Director of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages, for the great collaboration. She embraced the idea and by offering the exhibition hall in Veröld–House of Vigdís as the location, she secured the circumstances needed for the artists, the Director of the University Art Collection and the conference committee to see the work through, thanks also to the great assistance of Halldóra Þorláksdóttir, Project Manager and Valgerður Jónasdóttir, Events Manager.

Ladies and gentlemen, please enter the exhibition hall and enjoy!