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Subject: My Mother's Dream – Invitation to Opening
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GALLERY GUDMUNSDOTTIR



We warmly welcome you to the opening of the exhibition

My Mother's Dream

by

GUDNY GUDMUNSDOTTIR

ERLA S. HARALDSDÓTTIR

Friday June 16th,
between 17:00 – 20:00
at Gallery Gudmundsdóttir
Joachimstr. 17, 10119 Berlin

The unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united—a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are always already transcriptions. Originary prints.

—Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (1967)

In his seminal book *Writing and Difference*, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida clarifies his concepts of trace and supplement. He speaks of the “unconscious text” as an ideal where meaning and force are conjoined, and yet spectrally absent—file cabinets filled with copies of “originary prints.” Erla Haraldsdóttir’s autobiographical and autoethnographic project *My Mother’s Dream* revolves around a dream that her great-great grandmother had when she was a teenager. It consists of a book with the diary entry with which the artist’s great-grandmother records her mother’s dream and of a series of large-format paintings and smaller sketches that illustrate sequences from a kinswoman’s dream from around the year 1858.

The dream unfolds as a series of encounters with “hidden people,” as elves are called in local Icelandic belief. The book contains a facsimile of the diary entries, a photograph of the artist’s great-great-grandmother and great-grandmother, and translations of the dream into a matrix of languages that have played an important role in the artist’s life and work, namely, English, Swedish, Icelandic, German, and isiNdebele (a Bantu language of South Africa). Dominant and minoritarian languages thus form a basis for different readings and transcriptions—Derrida’s “originary prints”—and this text of the unconscious is likewise valorized by the artistic process of its translation into pigment on canvas, or paper, or wall. Text and textile merge, as themes such as family, women’s work, and what C. G. Jung would call an archetypal dream that taps into the collective unconscious are coming into focus. The familial and private thus strives towards the collective public and symbolic. But it doesn’t end there, as *My Mother’s Dream* literally has a reverse side, *My Dream*, consisting of blank pages that invite readers to record their own unconscious dreamscapes.

The dream in Haraldsdóttir’s work deals with birthing: the husband of a “hidden woman”/fairy mother seeks the help of a young girl (the dreamer) for his wife who is going into a difficult labor. The girl agrees to assist and in return is promised the gift of an intricate Icelandic traditional folk costume. But the fairy mother provides an injunction: the girl must never speak of this event in waking life. Naive as she is, she fails to heed this advice and is visited again by the furious fairy mother, who takes back the folk costume. This traumatizes the dreaming girl to such an extent that she refuses to undergo confirmation, an important rite of passage into adulthood for Icelandic teenagers. How does the dream end? Twofold: after reconciling with the dreamer, the “hidden woman” tells her a secret blessed word for times of trouble; on her deathbed, the dreamer recounts her dream to her daughter, but does not reveal the secret of the blessed word.

The distant, fairytale-like, unconscious material of these dreams is probed for the contents of this exhibition. It presents a new large-format painted diptych of the “hidden woman”/fairy mother before and after the great-great-grandmother incurs her wrath. It also includes a mural that sits between the two parts of the painting. The English text of *My Mother’s Dream* appears in a new series of works on paper in the shape of illuminated manuscript pages. The large-format painting *My Mother’s*

Dream, where the dream is recorded as a blown-up illuminated manuscript page, is presented for the second time after an exhibition at Norrtälje Konsthall in 2021. Additionally, there are several inkjet prints of female reproductive organs merging with Icelandic folk costumes in a variety of colors. Last but not least, Haraldsdóttir is exhibiting for the first time a series of oil paintings of dream sequences and natural landscapes from Iceland in small square formats.

Thus, the pure traces of an original unconscious writing take shape – in a painting of the unconscious, an autoanthropology of the unconscious, and an exploration of the self, kinship, womanhood, and language.

Text by Craniv Boyd



Erla S. Haraldsdóttir (b. in Reykjavík) works with painting, drawing, printmaking and photomontage as a means to cite cultural symbols and insert them in evocative images, suggestive of narrative form. An academically trained painter who has versatile experience in performative genres and video art, she currently focuses on figurative painting, where the physicality of paint and colour creates and troubles the illusion of space, light and shadow. Her works are drawn from a wide range of art-historical materials and motifs, which she recombines with painterly brilliance and humor. The works often remix or mash up elements of personal iconography and cultural heritage to explore how affect, kinship, memories and perception interact. Methodology is central and Haraldsdóttir's process-driven work is often based on a combination of rules and restrictions, places or stories, and tasks assigned to her by other people.

She currently lives and works in Berlin and Johannesburg.

Gallery Gudmundsdóttir
opening hours:
16. June – 29. July 2023
Tuesday – Saturday
13.00 – 18.00

www.erlaharaldsdottir.com

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Image

"Ester, the great, great, great grandchild of the dream maker" 2023,

Erla S. Haraldsdóttir

oil on canvas

30 x 30 cm

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