

Guðmundur Thoroddsen

Howling Hills

September 9 - October 23, 2021



Asya Geisberg Gallery is proud to present "Howling Hills" by Icelandic artist **Guðmundur Thoroddsen**, the artist's fifth solo exhibition at the gallery. Thoroddsen continues to employ his painterly trope of anthropomorphized cartoonish dogs, as they traverse implied landscapes or occupy transient spaces. In Thoroddsen's previous exhibition "Earth to Earth", the canine heads seemed frozen, as if broken open and unwilling to reassemble appropriately. Now, his subjects have transformed into fully-fledged human surrogates, a more contained mechanism for the artist to further explore the pressing formal concerns that have engendered this body of work. Thoroddsen deftly weaves a painterly tapestry that effortlessly ping pongs between simplification and obfuscation. Like a lucid dream, obvious "things" cleave into questionable entities, a face with a sausage nose melts into the backdrop, whilst rooms and spaces shift from the real to the imagined.

In several works, the dogs in "Howling Hills" waft in and out of indistinct perspectival framing devices, furthering confusing the interior with exterior, or the private and the public. The search for something in a barren land, forces both the viewer and the artist to repeatedly return to the subject. Hints of rocky outcrops, waterfalls and horizons become an echo chamber of the quietly withering subjects - the tension and sadness permeate, but neither come directly into focus. When figures or heads interact there is no clear consequence, as everything segues back into the tightly contained color palette. In the painting "Happy Idiot", a single head looms - its solemnity offset by a definable smile, a cartoonish nose and a floppy ear, thus facilitating our pleasurable navigation of Thoroddsen's bleak but alluring terrain.

"Howling Hills" is an elegant study of the anxieties of painting, a beautiful dance of saying and not saying, of a conceptual camouflage that works to deprive the artist's desire to simply depict a figure in a landscape. Between subject and ground, a symbiotic relationship flourishes - each not quite a thing in and of itself, the metaphorical howling symbolic of their coalescence. Thoroddsen's greatest gift lies within the tension of what he conceals and reveals with the gloop, the scraping away, the rubbing and hushing of his signature somber hues. The concealed landscape somehow takes center stage, but does not upstage. Thoroddsen's paintings foster a ghostly presence-absence that feels both pertinent and timeless. Despite this indeterminacy, his subjects remain as intriguing as ever - and are a much-needed humorous antidote to the gloomy Nordic millieux.

--Holly Jarrett

After studies in Iceland, Holland, Berlin, and Granada, Thoroddsen completed his MFA at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include Hverfisgallerí, Reykjavík; The Hafnarborg Museum, Hafnarfjörður; The Reykjavík Art Museum; Harbinger Gallerí, Reykjavík; Hverfisgallerí, Reykjavík; and Tysgalleri, Reykjavík. Group exhibitions include the Reykjavík Art Museum; Bredgade Kunsthandel, Copenhagen; The Akureyri Art Museum; The Knockdown Center, New York; Quartair, The Hague; Ausstellungsraum, Basel; DODGE Gallery, New York; Kling and Bang Gallery, Reykjavík; and Danziger Gallery, Berlin. He was nominated for the ArtPrize Top 2D Award for his SiTE:LAB show in Grand Rapids, MI. Press includes The New York Times, Hyperallergic, Art F City, Whitehot Magazine, Elephant, New York Magazine, Art Observed, Art Zine, The Icelandic Times, and Twin Magazine, and his work appears in the 2011 publication "Icelandic Art History from late 19th Century to Early 21st Century". He participated in Fallingwater Residency, Mill Run, PA, and the Fountainhead Residency, Miami, FL, and is the recipient of multiple artist grants from the Icelandic Art Center, Myndstef, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Iceland, and is a finalist for the Icelandic Art Prize 2019.



Guðmundur Thoroddsen
Surrounded, 2020
Oil on canvas
63h x 63w in



Guðmundur Thoroddsen
"Surprised Thief", 2021
Oil on canvas
47.24h x 47.24w in

Myndlistarsjóður
Icelandic Visual
Arts Fund

This exhibition is supported by the Icelandic Visual Arts Fund