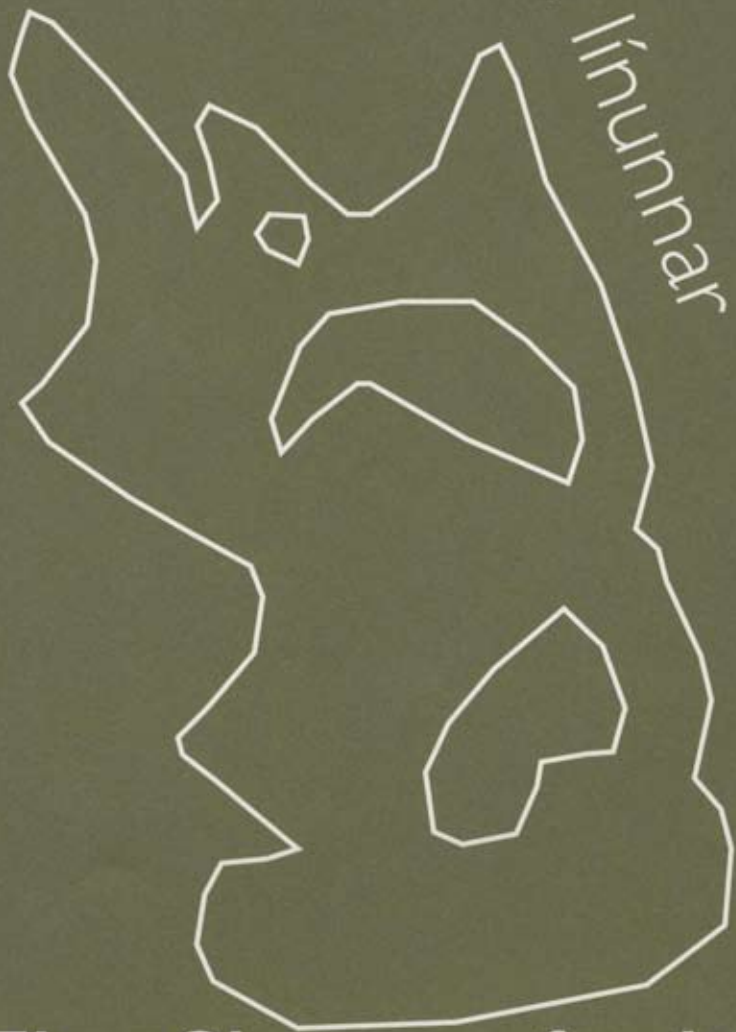


Lögum línunnar



The Shape of a Line

The Shape of a Line

In my experience, driving along the countryside in Iceland when the skyline is bathed in twilight is a moment to take in the mysterious beauty of nature. Somehow the ghostly iridescence of the sky gives the landscape its soul. It is hard not to be mesmerized by the silhouette of the mountains, which quietly transform into flat dark shapes undisturbed by the high beams of the moving vehicle. What attracts my attention is the glimmering thin light that separates the sky from the mountains. It is an almost invisible line that gives the landscape and heaven their shapes. A similar experience occurred once when I made an unexpected turn in the streets of Reykjavík and drove by a massive sculpture. It was bathed in shadows against grey skies. Only its outline was prominent and from the mounds I saw in my mind Ásmundur Sveinsson's *Water Bearer* and sensed the weight she bore. Maybe I drew the impression from my knowledge of the sculpture, or maybe it was the lights that came on a split second later that confirmed her identity, but it was her contour that I spotted briefly that stayed with me.

Around the mid 1940s, Ásmundur Sveinsson began to explore abstraction in his work and for over two decades his abstract sculptures developed in two distinct directions. While his carved works retained their figurative features,

he constructed pieces out of iron and steel rods and strips that were sharp and angular. The contrasting characteristics had inspired Ásmundur to pursue the opposite forms of abstraction simultaneously in the latter part of his career. In the exhibition the two manners of abstraction are assembled alongside one another. While their differences are clearly visible, they share recurring strengths – the invisible linear tensions surrounding an abstract organic form are echoed by the enclosed sensual grace emitting from a composition of geometric lines.

In an interview between the sculptor and Matthías Johannessen, Ásmundur's words reflected his creative spirit:

"The sculptor's art? It's taking material, forming it, and allowing the light to play with it. It's playing with light. Light and matter speak together in sculpture. Lines and air carving create a unity out of diversity ..."

(Sculptor Ásmundur Sveinsson –
An Edda in Shapes and
Symbols; page 67)

Curator:

Yean Fee Quay

Head of Exhibition department

Um listamanninn

Ásmundur Sveinsson fæddist á Kolsstöðum í Dölum þann 20. maí 1893. Tuttugu og tveggja ára að aldri flutti hann til Reykjavíkur og lærði tréskurð hjá Ríkharði Jónssyni. Hann nam einnig teikningu undir handleiðslu Þórarins B. Þorlákssonar málara. Ásmundur hélt til frekara náms í Kaupmannahöfn og síðar í Listaháskólanum í Stokkhólmi þar sem helsti leið-beinandi hans var hinn frægi sænski skúlptúrlistamaður, Carl Milles.

Ásmundur var frumkvöðull í íslenskri höggmyndalist og var á meðal þeirra sem kynntu Íslendingum nýja tegund listar á 20. öldinni. Skúlptúra hans má finna í almenningi víða um land enda var skoðun hans sú að list ætti ekki aðeins að vera fyrir fáa útvalda heldur hluti af daglegu lífi allra.

Ásmundur lést í Reykjavík þann 9. desember 1982. Hann gaf Reykjavíkurborg safn verka sinna, heimili sitt og vinnustofu í Sigtúni. Ásmundarsafn hefur verið opið almenningi síðan 1983.

About the Artist

Ásmundur Sveinsson was born on the farm Kolsstaðir in Dalir on May 20, 1893. At the age of 22, he moved to Reykjavík and began studying wood-carving under Ríkharður Jónsson. He also studied drawing under the direction of Þórarinn B. Þorláksson, a pioneer painter. Ásmundur continued his studies in Copenhagen and later at the Royal Academy of Art in Stockholm where his main instructor was the renowned Swedish sculptor Carl Milles.

One of the pioneers of Icelandic sculpture, Ásmundur was among those who introduced Icelanders to a new form of art in the 20th century. His sculptures can be found in public places throughout the country, in keeping with his idea that art should not be only for a chosen few but part of the daily lives of all people.

Ásmundur passed away in Reykjavík on December 9, 1982. He donated his collection and his home and studio at Sigtún to the City of Reykjavík. The Ásmundur Sveinsson Sculpture Museum has been open to the public since 1983.