



## HARPA DÖGG KJARTANSÐOTTIR

“Pulsations”

13 Dec 2012 – 26 Jan 2012

Gallery Bergman Berglind Contemporary Art  
49, rue Baudouin L-1218 Luxembourg-Hollerich  
[www.bergmanberglind.com](http://www.bergmanberglind.com)



*Héðan og þaðan / From here and there, 2012*  
Collage on metal sheet,  
21 x 24,5 cm

## **The Fluid World of Harpa Dögg Kjartansdóttir's Art**

by Jón Proppé

A complicated system of pipes branches through the open space. The pipes connect to a system of roots and wires that finally come together in a pile of cogged wheels and other clockwork parts. We hear hidden machinery working out of sight – a rhythmic, pumping effort. The work is clearly all about flow, suggesting a constant transfer through the system.

The image is familiar to a point. We are surrounded by such systems. Our dwellings are threaded through with pipes and wires that channel water, cold and hot, and electricity. In our gardens we observe how trees and other plants pull water from the ground and transfer it through capillary action through the organism. We also know that our own bodies contain such systems for the distribution of blood, lymph and neural impulses. The whole world, indeed, is full of such tangles. the natural world as well as our man-made one. Pipes and wires of various sorts form a tangle beneath our cities, much like the tangled roots beneath our garden. Everything is dedicated to the flux, constantly pumping and pulling, transferring material, energy or information from place to place.

The image is also disturbing because it mixes up the several different systems, each necessary to the maintenance of our lives but always, rigorously, kept separate. Our understanding of the natural world, and the complicated systems which our engineers have added onto it, depends on this taxonomic separation. The artist, Harpa Dögg Kjartansdóttir, breaks the rules of our taxonomies, mixing that which should never be allowed to mingle. It amounts to a kind of blasphemy against our carefully engineered world view. The system, so reassuringly normal and familiar, has been corrupted by collage.

Kjartansdóttir's method has a history that we can trace back through the development of the avant-garde, back to the strange assemblages of the Dadaists and the collages of the Surrealists. It cuts up, disassembles, reorders, confuses and reassembles the world. Taxonomies break down and time itself is mixed up in ways that make our minds reel. This is evident in most of Kjartansdóttir's works, such as her collages on paper or on paint buckets that have cut up and flattened out. She seems to delight in blending one world with another, mixing fact and fantasy, two dimensional images with three dimensional objects, serenity and chaos, the organic and the mechanical.

Since graduating from the Icelandic Academy of the Arts in 2007, Kjartansdóttir has explored this world of transgressions and the complicated installation in the gallery is a distillation of her varied researches. It shows in essence the core of the collage project as it has developed in the twentieth century avant-garde and in her own work. It is an elaborate Surrealist fancy but also represents a cutting critique of the way we order and build our world, our reliance on taxonomic thought and engineered systems. This world view, while certainly effective and therefore so successful, blinds us to other possible ways of perceiving and imagining our lives: The symbolic, aesthetic and moral dimensions that we nowadays glimpse only in art.

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*Jón Proppé*

*Born 1962, Jón Proppé is an independent writer, lecturer and curator. He studied philosophy at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, but has written primarily about art in the last two decades. He has published more than 400 reviews, articles and catalogue texts, and is one of the fourteen authors of a new five-volume history of Icelandic art published in 2011.*



**Inner inspection, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
44,5 x 69 cm



**Virus, 2012**  
Collage on metal sheet,  
33 x 43,5 cm

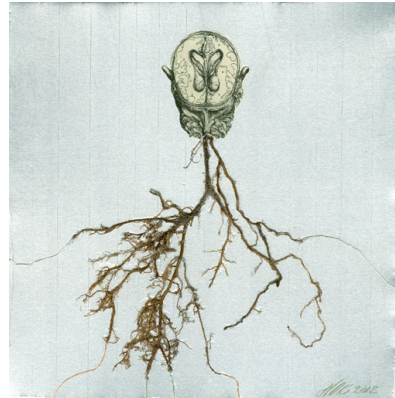


**Hálfum hljóðum, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Brainstorm, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm

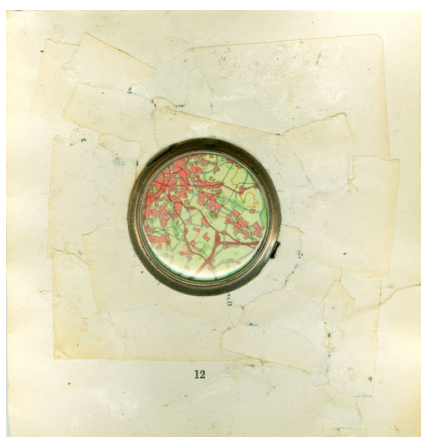
**Chaos of trouble, 2012**  
Collage on metal sheet,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Tímans rás / Over time, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm

**Colour my life, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm

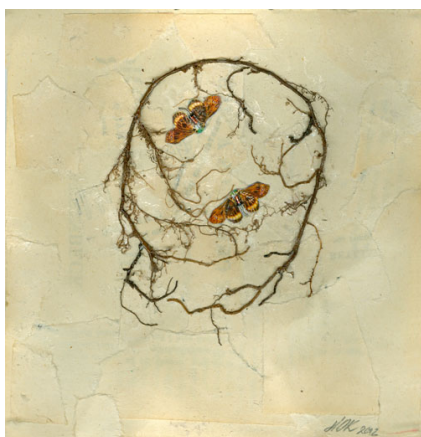




**Code, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Taktur / Rythm, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Tviburar / Twins, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Kerfis-kort, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Dulráð, 2012**  
Collage on metal sheet,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



**Klukkanvisar / Indicators, 2012**  
Collage on paper,  
13,5 x 13,5 cm



*Lausnarlyklar, 2012*  
*Collage on metal sheet*  
*23 x 15 cm*





## Poetic Recycling

In a modern society, we tend to be governed by time, which plays a key role in the social organization of our culture. Time is a commodity, always in short supply governing our existence like some supernatural power. Time can also be viewed as a biological rhythm beginning at birth and ending in death, when the cycle of life has been completed.

Harpa Dögg Kjartansdóttir has worked in various media, including collage, installation, video and photography, resulting in surrealistic and lyrical pieces with hints of the methods of the Dadaists and Pop artists. In her recent work, Kjartansdóttir has focused on collages and installations in which she works with found objects, such as pages ripped from old books, cut-out maps, branches and roots of trees, electric wires, old clockwork mechanisms and steel piping.

She collects old, used objects, lifts them from their original context and reassembles them in a new, surrealistic and epic way. In the well-ordered reality of our lives, it is very easy for such objects to be ignored as worthless, but Kjartansdóttir breathes new life into them when she transforms them into art. They are stripped of their former meaning, and she presents them in an unusual, less familiar context, unassociated with anything beyond itself. The objects gain new significance as she encourages a dialogue between them, resulting in lyrical and dreamlike worlds of juxtaposition.

Pieces where she places side by side torn-out pages from old books, cut-out maps, a piece of moss and pieces of old dismantled clockwork foster a dialogue between the past and the present. In the old organic time, life was anchored in the rhythm of nature, whereas in modern times, it is linear and measurable, and governs our lives by the minute, while our hearts continue to beat in harmony with time, the pulse of our existence.

In other pieces she takes roots and connects them to electric wires and old piping to resemble a vascular system, thereby creating a dialogue between the physical and the mechanical in which the organic merges with the mechanical, alerting us to the extent to which we are governed by systems, whether of time and nature or of the industrial world in which we live.

The roots also engender a sense of belonging to our natural surroundings with the ability to draw energy from the earth and distribute it via the trunk of the tree. The solidity of the tree's base conveys the concept of the root as a constant element in our relationship with our surroundings, like the cut-out maps that relate to a similar idea of parts belonging to a whole.

In her art, Kjartansdóttir depicts our existence as belonging to seemingly opposing and ever-changing systems. Furthermore, the materials she uses highlight the importance of systems, cycles, repetition and recycling. Her work is visual but humanly complex, and challenges us to look at our existence in a new light.

Thorhildur Einarsdóttir



