

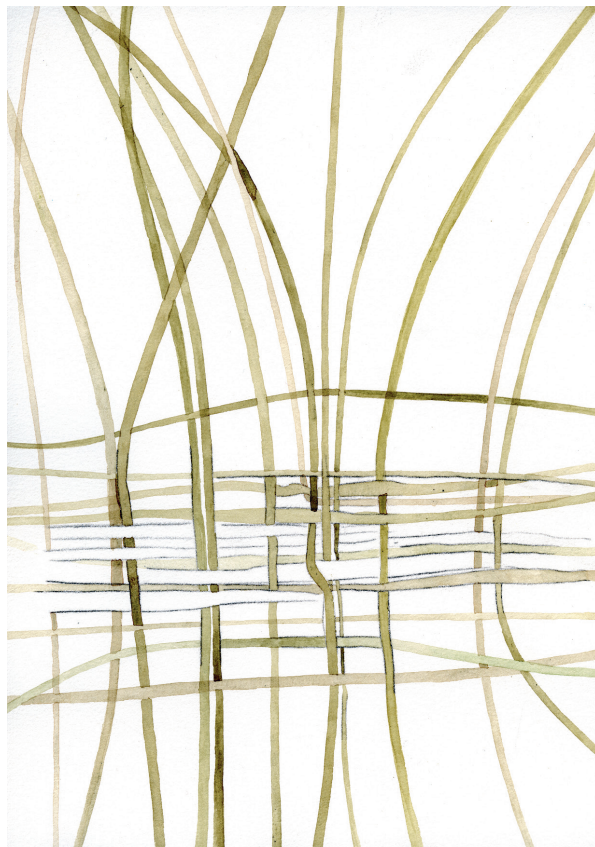
# Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir

## *A Fantastic voyage*

When I was a child I saw the sci-fi movie *Fantastic Voyage* (1968) for the first time. The film, starring Stephen Boyd and Raquel Welch, tells a story about a selected group of scientists and specialists who are shrunk down to the size of somatic cells in order to travel in a vessel no larger than one micrometer through the body of a real sized man. Throughout the film the heroes make their way past various human organs and infrastructure of the body. They battle microscopic monsters and elude the dangers that a foreign micro-object might encounter inside a human body such as cell sucking threads that are woven together like nets, some weird sticky stuff that tries to suffocate them and bubble-like forms that bounce around the vessel large enough to swallow it whole. Luckily, for the shrunken heroes, the movie is American so after a hard day's work they save the day and exit the body through the man's right eye just in time to be enlarged again to their normal size.

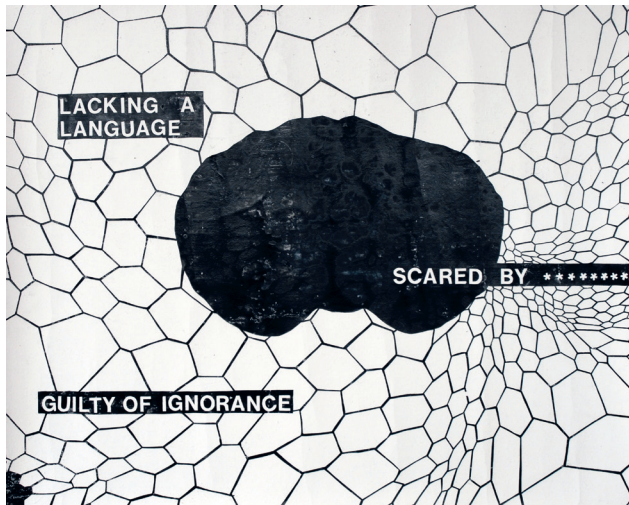
The storyline of *Fantastic voyage* is of course an excuse to create scenarios that show the infamous visual wonders of inner space as other films during this time did with outer space, capturing the imagination of any person of any age, as he or she is confronted by an abstract world of a perfect organic geometric system that we call the human body.

I first saw a show of Guðný Rósa Ingimarsdóttir's work in Gallery Hlemmur in 2002. The show consisted of rather minimalistic works, seemingly abstract, yet they struck me very physically. There were all these forms, lines, knots and dots that were visually uncanny to me but emotionally familiar. I was quite intrigued with her art and would follow it with great interest over the following years. Still, it was not until I saw her solo shows in Suðsuðvestur and The National Gallery in Iceland in 2007 and 2008 that I realized



*Untitled - Barriers, Watercolour and traces of carbon on paper, 29,7x 21 cm, 2007.*

that her art was in fact a *fantastic voyage* that dealt with the visual wonders of inner space that is as fascinating to look at as that abstract world I remembered in that weird sci-fi movie from the 60's.



*Stupidity, Gouache, acrylics, ink and varnish on carved paper, 68,4x84 cm., 2007.*

Guðný Rósa was born in Reykjavík in 1969. She now lives and works in Brussels but takes equal part in the Icelandic art scene as she does in the Belgium one. Guðný Rósa works in various mediums, such as sculpture, sound, video, photography, drawings, collage, sewing and painting. Her shows are usually presented as installations where she combines different mediums. Watercolor has however always played an important role in her two dimensional works. But in recent years her use of water dissolvable materials has grown and it is safe to say that it is now a dominant medium in her art.

Guðný Rósa rarely uses just one kind of water dissolvable material in a picture. She mixes together gouache, watercolor, acrylics and ink or layers them over each other and then, in a rather unique way, cuts the skin of the paper and peels it off. In that way she creates clear white lines and forms. It is also one of the ways she writes text in her images, as for instance in the painting/drawing *Stupidity* where she began by covering the paper with gouache, acrylics and ink and from there on made a grid and text by cutting off the top skin of

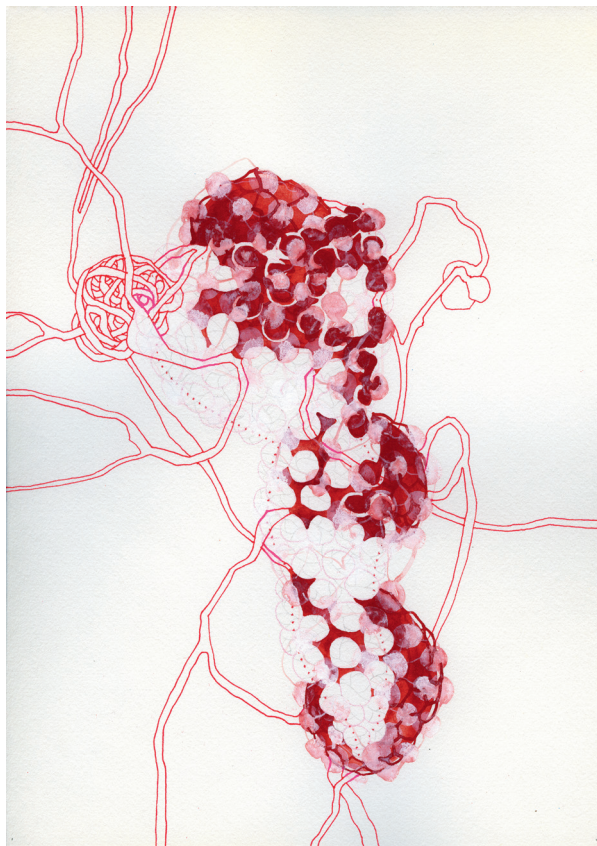


*View, Watercolor, gouache, ink and pencil on folded paper, 29,7x21 cm, 2007.*

the paper and peeling it off. Ironically, the image in *Stupidity* does resemble a cell or perhaps a vessel floating through an organic grid system that might appear inside a body.

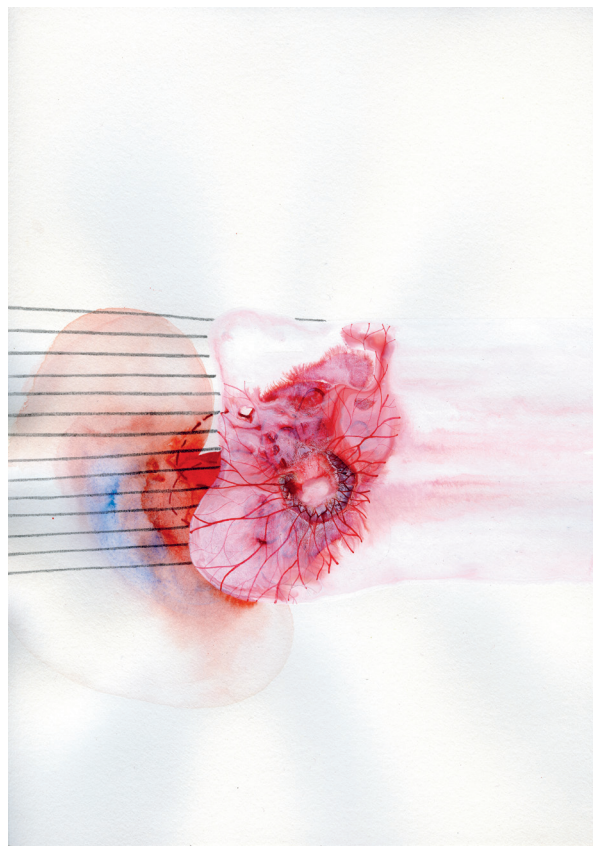
Guðný Rósa's pictures do point to an organic world that one may relate to the human body. Yet one cannot limit them in such figurative context. There is only the resemblance of the forms and structure of the internal human body. But it is not necessarily a human body. It may be any kind of body, actual or imaginative.





*Untitled - Captured, Watercolor, gouache, traces of carbon paper, pen and pencil on paper, 29,7x21 cm, 2005.*

It is interesting to relate Guðný Rósa's paintings to the phenomenology of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his idea of "the lived body". Merleau-Ponty challenged Rene Descartes' body-mind dualism, "Corgito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am), that proclaimed the body to be a machine that is run by the mind. For Merleau-Ponty the body is not a machine but a living organism through which we body-forth our possibilities in the world. Our existence is therefore lived through our body that is not separated from the mind, for we are our body.



*Formation, Watercolor, gouache, arabic gum and pencil on paper, 29,7x21 cm, 2006.*

Perhaps this is one way of seeing Guðný Rósa's work, as the body of painting not run by an idea or concept, but painting that is its own body. For me, having followed her art for 10 years is therefore like having joined her in a *fantastic voyage* through the body of painting where I witness the same sort of abstract visual wonders that one might encounter travelling inside an organic system in a one micrometer vessel.

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