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“The longing for Paradise is man's longing not to be man.”
Milan Kundera, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being”)

My works have always held a great degree of contradiction. Upon first inspection they seem calm and alluring, but on a closer glance, the viewer becomes aware of the tension created by the manipulation of the surface and oppositional elements. The work seems to be coming apart, exposing a deep interior beyond the depicted image. There is a play of nostalgia with cynical, theatrical fantasy in times of environmental disaster. They are intentionally askew and vortexed towards the center. They imply destabilization, and challenge the viewer in how to navigate through the painting. The painting draws the viewer in, and refuses to let go. I spend considerable time in nature, as I work as a nature hiking guide, and through the years it has quite naturally evolved that I have become passionate about geology. Painting is inherently geological in nature in that it is composed of layer upon layer, each holding a story, a history, a testament of a time, experience, situation. Each painting represents the human condition, a life lived, memory upon memory stored, hidden, accessed at times, shaping and molding us. We become the mountain, strong at times, but not invincible, sculpted by the forces around us.

My series WITNESS addresses the urgent need to deal with climate change. The current work explores the rapid changes taking place around our glaciers due to climate change. The mood of the new work is at once ominous, projecting uncertainty and tension as it is warm and nostalgic, already projecting a land that was. The motifs are glacial landscapes around Iceland. The works aim to be a ballad, a love song to a nature soon lost. They have a delicate, tender quality, but equally project a more violent, forlorn and freakish side, like a deer in the headlights. The motifs are frequently places I have been coming to since I was a child, locations where the glacier has retreated greatly and one already senses loss and panic.

My series **NATIONAL PARKS** conjures up an almost idyllic setting that the viewer can immediately relate to. These paintings make references to places like Yosemite or Icelandic national parks, an image of an exquisite valley that we recognize and claim as our own, and in the process, gain a sense of certainty, security and identity. It is an over-sentimentalizing of these iconic places, and upon a closer look one realizes that each image holds a mixture of several landmarks piled into one. The image is on the verge of imploding. The setting becomes an overloaded tortoise of mountains, one weighing upon the next. There is a degree of suffocation in a work that at the same time is referencing a place that is supposed to be light and uplifting.

The **BLOW** series are open to interpretation, implying a volcanic eruption, sex, breath, the volatile and the apocalyptic. The compositional elements are intended to play with the viewer. The image draws you in, whereas the flow wants to leave the painting, creating a confusion, complexity, and disorientation as to how to land within the painting. The weight of the skies become an image of sex, life's ultimate fulfillment as well as an overpowering ominous force. **Blow** casts references to the San Francisco hippie era, a dance of exuberant joy with the suggestion of unrealized ultimate freedom, lightness and optimism, that inevitably unattainable ideal that we in our contemporary times, with the weight of experience and history, nevertheless cling to and aspire to. The work parts on a celebratory note, insistent on the splendid spectacle that life is.

“And as much as I'd like to believe that there is truth beyond illusion, I've come to believe that there's no truth beyond illusion. Because, between “reality” on the one hand and the point where the mind strikes reality, there's a middle zone, a rainbow edge where beauty comes into being, where two very different surfaces mingle and blur to provide what life does not: and this is the space where all art exists, and all magic.” (Donna Taart, “The Goldfinch”, 2013)

Arngunnur Ýr is a visual artist who lives in Iceland and San Francisco. She has her BFA from The San Francisco Art Institute and MFA from Mills College, Oakland, CA, USA. She has also studied at the Icelandic School of visual Art and Rietveldt Academie, Amsterdam, Holland. She has exhibited worldwide in the last thirty years, and her works are in international collection of banks, businesses, museum and private collectors. Collections include Mills College Art Museum, Reykjavík Art Museum, Kópavogur Art Museum, Hafnarfjörður Art Museum, Árnes Art Museum OECD, EFTA, Microsoft, NIKE, Hótel Rangá, Icelandair, and many more.