

## Sigurdur Arni Sigurdsson

### **Corrections**

12 mai - 25 juin 2011

Private viewing Thursday May 12th from 6pm to 9pm.



You don't fool around with the geometry of the sun. Everybody knows that, and S.A. Sigurdsson more than anyone. And actually, at first glance, his painting doesn't look like it is fooling. In the twenty years his work has been shown around France – and in particular at Aline Vidal's gallery for fifteen years – he has been known for that economical painting made of frequently monochrome surfaces, of deliberate shapes (circles, most often), sometimes free of colour and thus showing the bare canvas. He has been known also for landscapes which, in their simplification, appear to belong to an artificial world of toy or model-like ideality – dreamt up by a Great Designer intent on streamlining the universe, on smoothing out the disorders and irregularities of nature to underline its full and consistent shapes. But – (because there is a but as few of us believed in that smooth, much too smooth, paradise) – these places, these objects, these

architectures often carry their own otherness, their double, their necessary complement in order to remain ours – i.e. shadows. Of course, the shadow is rather reassuring, bringing us back to our world and our rhythm. The shadow is a shelter, and proof of our presence. But with Sigurdsson, under its quiet appearance and benevolent greys, the shadow points elsewhere – through its fixedness, its steadfastness, sometimes its ability to disarticulate, disperse, and disorient. The benevolent coherence that we demand from the shadow, here, lets us down on, stranded in grounds of uncertainty. Or even worse, as in the large pictures with water green backgrounds, when the shadow becomes autonomous, it stands free of whoever or whatever it should double. It then leads its grey, ghostly life, independent of what is no more, is not or is not yet. There is however no inclination toward the occult in this artist, but more than that, with a tranquillity of his own, the certainty that the imaginary world is made as much of delights as of paradoxes, of fullness as of emptiness, of things working and of others – in a balance which is not always visible...

Behind the work on canvas or paper, or the projects for public spaces – the latter, as it is, such as his work in neighbouring Iceland or the recent *In Praise of Nature*, commissioned by the town of Loupian, near Montpellier, playing with the light of stars – there is an approach that wasn't seen before, which could have remained a sort of studio entertainment, confined and unseen: it is the Corrections, now presented by the artist. Sigurdsson shows almost thirty of them today, selected among the hundred or so boards in which he associated a picture he came across to a more or less important graphic intervention. These pictures have generally had a first life, for instance as postcards. The artist takes hold of them firstly through a gesture of election, of selection, whose driving principle is not necessarily clear: landscapes, genre scenes, people or animals, famous places or ordinary places, there is little thematic connection between these pictures other than that they are previously circulated items – literally so in the case of some postal stamps and a geographic map –, that they convey a slightly

# GALERIE ALINE VIDAL

nostalgic atmosphere, that they belong to a mundane, banal, widespread collective memory, and that many of them are black and white pictures. Which probably matters since, at least originally, the interventions in the form of “corrections” are drawn by pencil so that, although not looking to create an optical illusion, they seem to wish themselves to be mere continuations of the pictures. Stuck onto the paper surface, the pictures are invited to play into their frame. Indeed, the interventions are often add-ons, prolonging the graphic structure of the picture – continuing an architectural structure, stretching a linear perspective, completing a character, a sign or a pattern beyond the arbitrariness of the photographic frame. The pictorial gesture thus challenges the off-screen, the importance of which is known in film, but which is also critical to whoever tries to fit pictures within the frame of a painting. It is not however some kind of spin-off, these interventions always gracefully finding their reason in the pictures themselves. These are never betrayed but at the most continued according to a graphic of thematic logic – whether through visual analogy, sideways duplication, completion or extension. This practice both deft and light in treatment is nonetheless powerful, to the point of transforming banal situations and causing to question the obvious by stressing the obvious. A practice of holding back from working on the picture which leads, through an almost childish treatment, to a troubled, doubled perception. Questioning the obvious, holding back – such are the figures described by Freud when pointing to the play on words, the *witz*, which opens to that approach of the paradoxical world he called – with a much more intense meaning than in our weakened daily usage – “humour”. Nothing there causes laughter, though, but rather a suspicion as much delightful as it is unhealthy, turning mawkishness into a well of amazement. If another clue is needed, the link with the painter’s work is again often apparent through the contrasted figure of the shadow. A low-headed poodle exposing its spine is thus seen lighted by a double sun that we clearly understand is a threat. The creature knows that. As for the Icelandic blonds in their hot bath, they are in turned into things, just like the puffin on an ornithologist’s illustration plate. Little is needed – a few pencil strokes, a highlight, a stress – to cause the picturesque, the vernacular, the anecdotal to offer the vision of a strangely textured world. And of its shadow.



Christophe Domino  
(translated by Cécile Nelson)

Sigurdur Arni Sigurdsson was born in 1963 in Akureyri, in Iceland.

He lives and works in Reykjavik and in Paris. He is represented on many collections : several museums in Iceland ( the National Museum of Iceland, the Museum of the city of Reykjavik...) and some French institutions (FNAC, various FRACS, City of Paris...)

He was representing Iceland in the Biennale of Venice in 1999 and has realized this year a state commission in France, *In praise of nature (L'éloge de la nature)*, in Loupian.