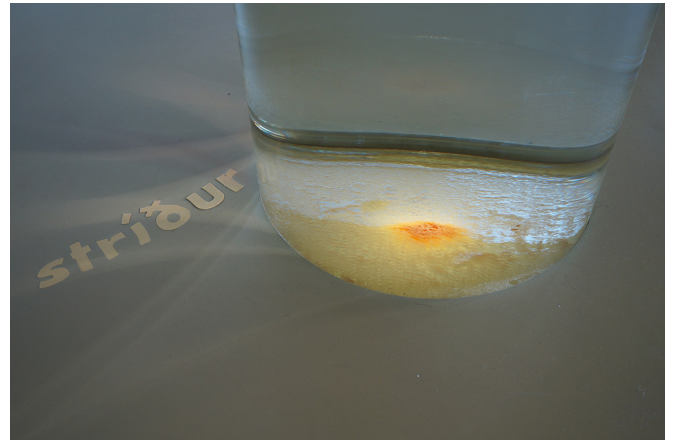


Presenter: Caroline Chang

Roni Horn

Library of Water, 2007, Stykkisholmur/IS, Permanent installation



Use of space:

Horn designed *Library of Water* for the local community. For those wanting a quiet space, it can be used for contemplation by looking through the glass columns, which warp and reflect the outside Icelandic landscape. The rubber floor has various weather-related words in Icelandic and English stamped on it. Those words are meant to serve as inspiration: to look outside the window, think about the weather, or simply meditate on the landscape.

In the big space meant for gatherings, Horn recorded various people from the town, Stykkishólmur, talking about the weather. As a “library,” these recordings serve as an archive.

Visitor Experience

Upon visiting, visitors must take off shoes to enter the space and step on the rubber floor.

Visitors, mostly locals, can spend as little or as much time as they want. Many come for peace and quiet reflection through looking out the giant windows and wandering among the columns.

Past the columns is a large empty space, which allows for community meetings and gatherings. In recent years it has hosted community events. There are chess tables, a writer’s residency on the floor below, and a reading room with Horn’s published books.

The Artist's Experience and Role

Once the town's local library, the structure was abandoned upon construction of a newer building. After visiting the town several times, Horn was able to secure funding from Artangel and get approval from both the town and the Icelandic Parliament to create an art installation.

Inspired by lighthouses, the building's position on a hill overlooking the water, and the round structure of the building, she expanded the windows.

By the space's entrance are 24 columns. The 24 columns, each filled with water from 24 different Icelandic glaciers, tie back to the Icelandic landscape. The columns offer a sense of permanence for the visitors with special meaning to the Icelanders, as Horn believes that humans have been impacting the Earth, such as causing the melting of glaciers.

Conceptual Depth and Sustaining Interest

The initial concept behind the installation (24 columns filled with water from 24 Icelandic glaciers) is simple, but still compelling. Depending on what time the visitor is at *Library of Water*, the light from the window reflects and warps the glass columns. When the visitor is looking through the columns to see through the windows, the landscape is warped and reflected in the columns' water.

Element of Surprise

Past the entrance and cluster of 24 columns are voice recordings of locals describing the weather. While throughout the *Library of Water*, Horn's obsession with water is clearly shown, her fascination with weather is much more subtle. Even when the viewer looks at the floor to see Icelandic and English words, the viewer may not necessarily associate them with weather. It's not until the visitor listens to the voice recordings that it may all fall into place.

Themes and Metaphors

The Icelandic landscape has always been a long-running theme in Horn's works. Water is another common theme in many of her works. In her Art21 interview, Horn calls water both a dependent and tolerant form, as it is shaped by its surroundings.

In *Library of Water*, the water is contained by the tall glass columns, which shape the water, but also the surroundings. The view of the windows are blocked by the glass columns, and reflected by the daily light shining through. Horn is also fascinated by how water is able to stay transparent and look practically the same everywhere in the world- she took water from 24 Icelandic glaciers, yet each column looks identical.

Also, she calls water a verb as it is everywhere and has the power to shape our experiences, and in this installation, it most definitely impacts how one views the Icelandic landscape.