

Jónsi

Vox

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Los Angeles

November 11, 2023 – February 3, 2024

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Vox*, Jónsi's third exhibition with the gallery and second in Los Angeles, on view from November 11, 2023 through February 3, 2024.

Interdisciplinary artist and musician Jónsi grounds his visual practice in material and metaphysical experimentations with sound, often through the engineering of immersive installations that reconfigure the act of listening by means of sight, smell, taste, and touch. Known for synthesizing compositions that are at once ethereal and electrifying, Jónsi employs a tonal palette ranging from ambient sounds, mechanically generated frequencies, samples from nature, as well as his own voice in boundlessly innovative sonic arrangements. Using a perfume organ to develop new and invigorating scents, Jónsi infuses his works with earthy, atmospheric fragrances that are subtle and frequently overlooked. In concert, these seemingly invisible forces redouble on their emotive strengths, leaving the viewer anchored through corporeal engagement while simultaneously transported via their cognitive imaginary.

Upon entering the main gallery, visitors encounter a sound and light installation that visualizes the human voice, the universally unifying instrument that predates speech and has existed throughout history, in celebration and in mourning. *Vox* translates the sound of Jónsi's voice to light frequency as it triggers four LED screens that surround the viewer. Sound and light move together in harmony, one reacting to the other. Every sound is comprised solely of the artist's natural voice, which is mixed with computerized and AI-generated voices, further mangled and distorted. This hybridization of the human and the machine manufactures new and otherworldly sounds. In an age where it is nearly impossible to discern real from fake audio, *Vox* asks us to ponder the idea of voice, a beautiful and ancient unifier, and its unlimited and unknowing potential to evolve. Considered the original musical instrument, the human voice connects us to our roots on a spiritual and innate level. The room is scented with the grounding roots of earthy vetiver grass and other root-based essential oils, as well as synthesized aroma molecules.

In the front gallery space, a blanket of speakers is suspended in the air, under which viewers can walk and become enveloped in ASMR-like sounds. Titled *Var*, the Icelandic word for shelter, the installation creates a momentary respite from the outside world. The canopy-like space is combined with calming sounds and the scent of cis-3-hexenol, one of the main components in freshly cut grass. Drawing inspiration from the term "safe space", which originated in LGBTQ+ culture, *Var* evokes a sense of tranquility and is a place to seek shelter.

Also on view is a standing speaker matrix consisting of more than 100 speakers that uses direct currents to change the physical state of the speakers. Normally, speakers are supplied with alternating currents to create sound, but in *Silent sigh (dark)*, the direct currents allow for sustained states of each speaker face. Different channels control the outward rippling of the speakers, which begins at the center and then gently radiates outward and then back in again, mimicking a wavelike pattern. Emanating from the speakers are the sounds of the direct current, and small vibrations still present in the current create the subtle breath-like sounds.

Over the past two decades Jónsi has collaborated with musicians, visual artists, and filmmakers to create a robust body of work across disciplines. Since initially gaining international recognition as the lead vocalist for the Icelandic experimental rock band Sigur Rós, Jónsi has worked with preeminent creative figures such as Doug Aitken, Cameron Crowe, Merce Cunningham, Olafur Eliasson and Carl Michael von Hausswolf, resulting in prestigious awards and critical acclaim. He has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Tasmania; the National Nordic Museum, Seattle; and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Born in Iceland in 1975, Jón Þór "Jónsi" Birgisson, lives and works in Los Angeles.

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