



The Idea of North



## FOREWORD

THE IDEA OF NORTH is a three-part exhibition of contemporary art from Canada, Iceland, Norway and Sweden that addresses the concept of the locality of sound. It is the result of a collaboration between curators in Canada (Rhonda Corvese), Iceland (Sólveig Alda Halldórsdóttir and Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir) and Norway (Yngvild Faerøy and Søsja Jørgensen). This collaborative curatorial process has brought together three diverse groups of artists in three distinct exhibitions in Norway, Iceland and Canada, and each exhibition has included installations and sound art works from these countries in different configurations. A total of 24 artists have been involved in this project, the majority of whom have presented works in two of the three international venues. In this manner, *The Idea of North* has fostered important links between the work of international artists, curators and exhibition centres.

THE FIRST EXHIBITION opened in May 2005 at Galleri F 15, Moss, Norway; the second, in June 2005 at Klink & Bank, Reykjavik, Iceland. The third configuration is a multi-venue exhibition taking place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, during January and February 2006; it includes installations at Dalhousie Art Gallery, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery and Eyelevel Gallery, as well as a performance at Anna Leonowens Gallery (NSCAD University) and a peripatetic work that takes visitors on a "guided tour" of parts of downtown Halifax (facilitated by the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia). The participating Galleries are located within walking distance of each other, in different neighbourhoods, ensuring that visitors must move through the city to different venues to experience the works, and therefore absorb (consciously or not) the city soundscape in relation to the sound art works. The idea of mapping, following a guide, listening, looking, making one's way to different venues through a winter-bound city, fits well with the premise of *The Idea of North*.

Curator Rhonda Corvese articulates this premise as follows: "What is the tone of a place? In December 1967 Glenn Gould addressed this question in his radio broadcast *The Idea of North* using a technique he called 'contrapuntal radio' to manifest multiple voices simultaneously. In a poetic reference to Gould's work, this exhi-

bition bears the same title and is a meditation on the idea of 'North' as a *perception* of place and locality, rather than a geographic position... ..addressing questions such as: what is the relation between sound art and locality and is it definable? To what extent is the experience of site-specific sound art determined by its location? How does the translocation of site-specific sound art alter the context/experience of the work?"

On behalf of our respective institutions (Dalhousie Art Gallery, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery and Eyelevel Gallery), we would like to express our pleasure at being the joint hosts of *The Idea of North* in its Canadian manifestation. The presentation of sound art fulfils an important part of each of our mandates – that which involves investigating contemporary art works, in particular those utilizing new media, by Canadian and international artists. All three galleries have made significant commitments towards the inclusion of media and sound art in their programming, Dalhousie through the establishment (in 2000) of a dedicated new media space, Saint Mary's through a strategic plan to further develop their well-recognized program of public presentations in audio art and new music, and Eyelevel in the creation this year of their new project space, Room Audio B, dedicated to experimental sound projects. In recent

years Halifax has been the site of a number of exhibitions and symposia that focus on audio art, and on installations and performances involving sound, including, most recently, the Sound Bytes 2005 audio festival at Anna Leonowens Gallery, NSCAD University (co-sponsored by the Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax), and we expect the works in *The Idea of North* and the accompanying programming will build on this burgeoning interest in sound and new media art and result in raised awareness, provocative discussion, and fascinating aural and visual experiences. In addition, we expect this exhibition will have particular resonance for many Atlantic Canadians who have strong cultural and economic connections with Nordic and Celtic peoples and other societies, both indigenous and immigrant, located along the ancient North Atlantic fishing, trading and shipping routes.

We would like to thank curator Rhonda Corvese for proposing this exhibition to us (encouraged by Eleanor King, who first saw the potential for hosting it here). It is due to Rhonda's belief in the project, her collaborative tenacity despite many logistical obstacles, and her active support of the artists involved, that the idea has become a reality. It has been a pleasure to work with her. We would also like to thank Rhonda for her cogent essay, which is included in this catalogue, and her co-curators Sólveig Alda Halldórsdóttir

and Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir in Iceland and Yngvild Faerøy and Søsja Jørgensen in Norway, for their commentaries on the versions of the exhibition that appeared in Reykjavik and Moss.

The Halifax visual art community is noted for its collegial and co-operative nature, and we have relied on this fact in the realization of this exhibition. We are grateful to all our colleagues who collaborated in the project or assisted with its many technical and logistical aspects: to Peter Dykhuis at Anna Leonowens Gallery, NSCAD University, for hosting Christof Migone's performance and arranging accommodations in the NSCAD loft; to Ilan Sandler, James MacSwain and the staff of the Centre for Art Tapes, for help in many aspects of this project, but particularly for assistance with Maia Urstad's installation and accommodations for her and her technician; to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, for collaborating in the presentation of *Soundroam* (by Eleanor King and Stephen Kelly); to Dalhousie University's radio station CKDU and technician Stephen Kelly for presenting the major part of Dana Samuel's *Fram/Forward*; to the technical and preparatory staff in each venue, especially Michele Gallant, Stephanie McNair, Robert Zingone, Ryan Suter, Terry Piercey, Robyn Moody and Richard Robertson; and to all those who opened their homes to accommodate the visiting artists, or who lent equipment

and expertise. We would like to thank Co.&Co. (Kate O'Connor, Morgan Rogers, Kate Sinclair, Ray Fenwick), the designers of this publication, the accompanying DVD, and the invitation/poster for the exhibition; and Sym Corrigan who acted as liaison between the designers and the institutions.

An international exhibition of this complexity requires considerable financial support. Each institution contributed substantial seed money to initiate the project, as well as their grant-writing skills. We are immensely grateful for the financial support of the Media Arts Section of the Canada Council for the Arts, without whose support this project would have been considerably diminished in scope. We are also grateful for additional support from the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, without whose assistance we would not have been able to undertake such a comprehensive publication, education and outreach program. Many individual artists also obtained grants from their respective national or provincial agencies in order to travel to Halifax to install their works and participate in the surrounding events, and these agencies are acknowledged in the appropriate sections. We would also like to acknowledge the Glenn Gould Estate and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for permission to present Gould's radio trilogy *The Idea of North*.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank the artists, whose visions and creativity are what this project is all about. We would like to acknowledge all the artists who participated in the exhibitions in the three international venues (listed at right), but most particularly the sixteen artists who are presenting their works in our galleries in Halifax: Steven Cuzner (Canada/Sweden), Jean-Pierre Gauthier (Canada), Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir & Ragnar Kjartansson (Iceland), Marla Hlady (Canada), Eleanor King & Stephen Kelly (Canada), Kristín Björk Kristjánsdóttir (Iceland), Christof Migone (Canada), Tasman Richardson (Canada), Dana Samuel (Canada), Sirra Sigrun Sigurdardóttir & Erling T.V. Klingenberg (Iceland), Liv Strand (Sweden), Maia Urstad (Norway) and Jana Winderen (Norway). This has been an amazing and inspiring international collaboration.

---

**SUE GIBSON GARVEY** (DIRECTOR/CURATOR  
DALHOUSIE ART GALLERY)

**ROBIN METCALFE** (DIRECTOR/CURATOR  
SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY)

**ERYN FOSTER** (DIRECTOR EYELEVEL GALLERY)

HALIFAX, JANUARY 2006

## ITINERARY

### Norway

29 MAY TO 7 AUGUST, 2005

**Location:** Galleri F 15, Moss

**Artists:** Steven Cuzner, Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Kolbeinn Hugi Höskuldsson, Jan Høvo, Eleanor King & Stephen Kelly, Moen & Pihlström, Dana Samuel, SKA Radio, Liv Strand, Maia Urstad, Jana Winderen & Trond Lossius

**Curators:** Yngvild Faerøy and Søsna Jørgensen

### Iceland

10 JUNE TO 10 JULY, 2005

**Location:** Klink & Bank, Reykjavík

**Artists:** Ásdis Sif Gunnarsdóttir, Marla Hlady, Kolbeinn Hugi Höskuldsson, Jan Høvo, Haraldur Karlsson, Ragnar Kjartansson, Kristín Björk Kristjánsdóttir, Christof Migone, Tasman Richardson, Birgir Örn Thoroddsen

**Curators:** Sólveig Alda Halldórsdóttir and Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir

### Canada

12 JANUARY TO 26 FEBRUARY 2006

**Curator:** Rhonda Corvese

- **Dalhousie Art Gallery**, opening: 12 January 2006 (Marla Hlady, Kristín Björk Kristjánsdóttir, Dana Samuel, Jana Winderen)
- **Saint Mary's University Art Gallery**, opening: 13 January 2006 (Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Ásdis Sif Gunnarsdóttir & Ragnar Kjartansson, Sirra Sigrun Sigurdardóttir & Erling T.V. Klingenberg, Maia Urstad)
- **Eyelevel Gallery**, opening: 14 January 2006 (Steven Cuzner, Eleanor King & Stephen Kelly, Christof Migone, Tasman Richardson, Liv Strand)
- **Art Gallery of Nova Scotia** reception desk: 14 January to 26 February 2006 (to pick up MP3 players for Eleanor King & Stephen Kelly's "tour")
- **Anna Leonowens Gallery**, NSCAD University, 14 January 2006 (Christof Migone's performance)

