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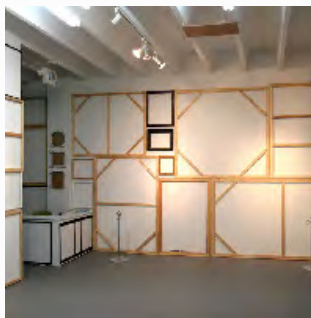
Art

Magnus Sigurdarson Knocks Art Off Altar at Dimensions Variable

By Carlos Suarez De Jesus Thu., Jul. 21 2011 at 9:30 AM
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Magnus Sigurdarson has always been a bit of a maverick in his multi-varied art practice, creating works ranging from photography exploring notions of identity to massive installations employing eight tons of salt and industrial fans to recreate an Icelandic tempest. In recent years we have seen imagery of the conceptual artist as a punk Viking washed up on the shores of South Beach after a drunken debauch and as a Beef Eater thumbing his nose at staid British customs.



Courtesy Magnus Sigurdarson and Dimensions Variable
 Absenteeism, Installation View

He has even rendered images of former first lady, Laura Bush reading to children on *Sesame Street*, in sensational Play Doh finger paintings critiquing the television show as a bastion of American propaganda.

For Sigurdarson, whose cranial gearbox is always whirring, art is a playground for tinkering with ideas even when he lacks inspiration. We caught up with the Icelandic native who spoke about his new show, "Absenteeism" at *Dimensions Variable* reflecting a stark departure from earlier works and his current take on the art world.

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Courtesy Magnus Sigurdarson and Dimensions Variable

Absenteeism, Installation View

"I filled the entire space with canvas stretcher bars and empty frames as an indicator that I don't have much to say right now," quips Sigurdarson who never does anything art related without first grinding it out obsessively in his brainpan.

"But I still need to make work somehow and that interior monologue with myself never stops," he says. "For me these objects used for framing are a façade, the structure that holds up the entire art world."

Sigurdarson has been collecting the frames and stretchers on view at Dimensions Variable for the past four years. He says that the concept of absenteeism reflects the notion of artists as employees of a gallery system who still have to schlep to their studios and remain productive even when uninspired.

"Think about it. Here people have this stereotypical idea that an artist never leaves work and is always creating," observes Sigurdarson. "But in France, for example, work stops at 4:00 p.m. and that's considered a basic human right," he laughs. "They cook dinner at 4:30 and that's another human right just as is spending an hour having coffee in the morning. We artists need our daily escapes to live life too".

He says his current show mines ideas of reduction from stress associated with labor and the overarching demands of success in the art world.

Sigurdarson pauses to reflect on the series of paintings he created using Play Doh he exhibited a few years ago at the Kevin Bruk Gallery mentioning that somehow they tie into his current show at Dimensions Variable.



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Magnus Sigurdarson

See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil

"In those works, I depicted Laura Bush reading to kids on Sesame Street in front of puppets while her husband, President Bush, was overseas shaking hands with a puppet representing a foreign government," cracks Sigurdarson. "In a way the forces that shape the art market work the same way," he says.

"I'm poking fun at the hierarchy of a capitalist market that creates demand for art and regulates the prices. Some people believe that if you 'don't own a Warhol then who the fuck are you'. I'm making a comment on knocking art as commodity off that altar".

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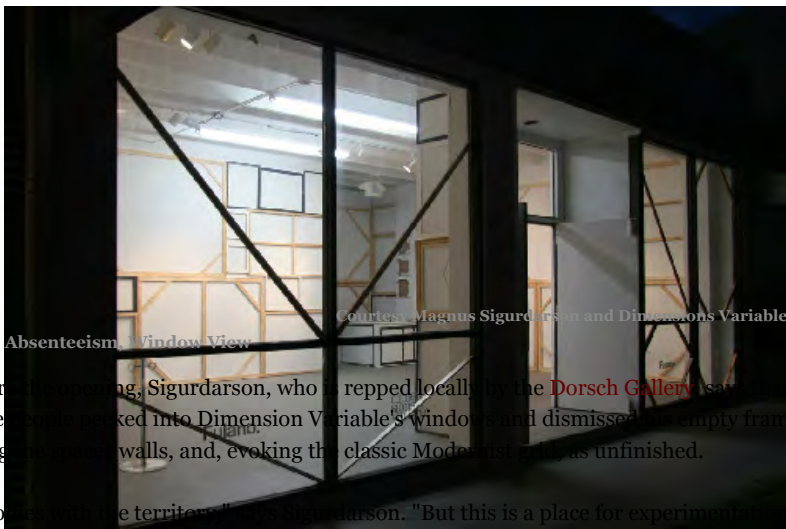
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Absenteeism Window View

Courtesy Magnus Sigurdarson and Dimensions Variable

Before the opening, Sigurdarson, who is repped locally by the **Dorsch Gallery**, sat on the floor and looked into Dimension Variable's windows and dismissed the empty frames lining the walls, and, evoking the classic Modernist aesthetic, he said, "It was unfinished."

"It could be the territory," he said. "But this is a place for experimentation. If people don't want to jump into the deep end of the pool they still have something beautiful to look at that works like a puzzle filling the room," he adds.

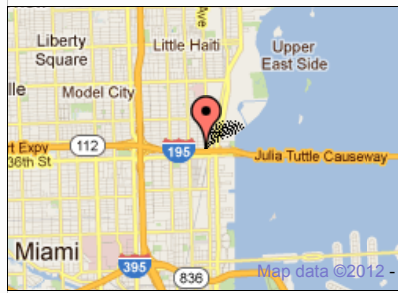
"Still some reactions were funny I have to say. That has always been my thing, jumping from medium to medium without hesitation and always thinking of art." You can see his video piece titled *I am thinking about it* [here](#):

"I look at the concept of absenteeism as part of the corporate lingo like branding where some artists are expected to create the same thing over and over again," he says. "I'm poking fun at that socialistically. Kind of like all the stretchers and frames of the world unite!" Sigurdarson laughs.

"Absenteeism" Through August 27. Dimensions Variable, 171 NE 38th Street, Miami. Call 305-607-5527 or visit dimensionsvariable.net.

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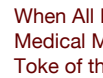
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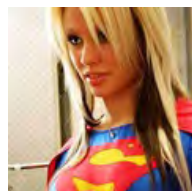
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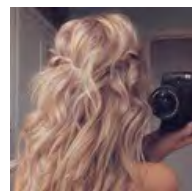
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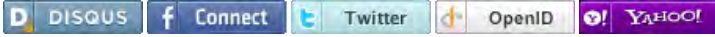


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